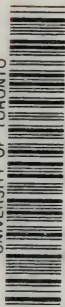


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GOETHE'S OPINIONS

ON

THE WORLD, MANKIND, LITERATURE,
SCIENCE, AND ART.

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GOETHE'S OPINIONS

ON

THE WORLD, MANKIND, LITERATURE,
SCIENCE, AND ART.

TRANSLATED

BY

OTTO WENCKSTERN.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE following collection of Goethe's sentiments and opinions has been extracted from his published correspondence with Schiller, Zelter, Stolberg, Reinhard, the Frau von Stein, Oeser, Reich, Rochlitz, Woltman, Mayer, Riemer, and Schuckman; and from his volumes of conversations published by Eckerman, Riemer, and Luden. None are taken from the poet's works; for although these would have yielded a rich harvest of sentiments and opinions, it has been thought advisable to confine the present publication to those opinions only which Goethe wrote or pronounced as his own, which can be guaranteed as expressing his own views, and which are unbiassed by the fictitious characters into whose mouths other opinions are put in his

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works. The present collection is intended for the purpose of showing Goethe *at home*; embodying as it does the salient points of his long and voluminous correspondence, its readers will be enabled to learn what Goethe thought, and how he thought, without plodding their weary way through a pile of books, which, however interesting they may be to the *littérateurs* of his own nation, cannot be expected to engage the attention of the public of another country.

It is not, of course, to be expected that either the Editor or the Publishers of such a work as this should adopt, or be responsible for, *all* the opinions it contains. As for the merits of these opinions in speculative matters, we must leave Goethe to fight his own battle with those who may differ from him; and that many may reasonably do so, we are free to admit. As to his mistakes in *matters of fact*, we have hesitated whether or not we ought to correct them. Such mistakes occur in this volume. In judging of Lord Byron's career and character, he states that Captain Byron was rich, and that Byron himself was pampered by affluence. These things, how-

ever, are so well known by those who care to know them, so important did it appear to us to follow the great German in every step, and so invidious on every occasion to smuggle our dissent or correction into a note at the bottom of the page, that we gladly leave the correction of Goethe's mistakes to the reviewers of his genius and his career. A few exceptions to this have been made, particularly in the case of Lessing; since the perversion of a fact, for the purpose of clenching an argument, appeared likely to mislead the public of a country in which Lessing is much less known than he ought to be.

As to the translation of the sentences, we are aware, from the peculiarity of Goethe's style, that some of the more speculative phrases may admit of double readings. Even the less enthusiastic among the Germans confess that their great writer is frequently slipshod—or as they call it, *salop*—in his expressions. Many terms are used according to the inspiration or the convenience of the moment: there is more moderation than propriety of diction in all that Goethe wrote. We have on such occasions done

our best to express his opinions, rather than the words chance threw into his way; but wherever it has been possible, we have adhered to his mode and manner of expression. In some instances, we give his forms of 'the Beautiful,' 'the Good,' 'the Inexpressible,' &c.; not because we admire this mode of expression, which is so unsuited to the genius of the English language, but because the frequent use of such abstract generalities is a distinguishing feature of the Goethian era and the Goethian *style*, which we desired to preserve whenever its preservation was compatible with the higher consideration of preserving the Goethian meaning.

W.

May, 1853.

GOETHE'S OPINIONS.

DESPOTISM promotes the autocracy of every one.

Anarchy and tyranny are equally hateful, but where is the medium which is so much to be desired? Every reasonable man seeks to establish it within his own sphere, but even there he will scarcely succeed.

The gift of moderation has not been vouchsafed to the world. It is not in princes to moderate power and prevent its abuse; nor can we induce nations, while waiting for gradual improvements, to remain in a state of moderation. If mankind were perfect, their condition too would be perfect; but such as we are, we must always rush into one extreme while we leave the other; some of us suffer while others are at their ease; egotism and envy will always have the upper hand, and the conflict of parties cannot and will not terminate.

The most reasonable course for every one is to remain in that station of life in which he has been born, and to follow the profession to which he was trained. Let the shoemaker stick to his last, the peasant to his plough, and the prince to his government. For government, too, is a trade which requires training, and to which no one ought to aspire who has not learnt it.

A truly *liberal* man employs all the means in his power to do all the good he can. He does not rush in with fire and sword to abolish imperfections, which are sometimes unavoidable. He endeavours, by cautious progress, to remove the ills of the body politic; but he eschews violent measures, which crush one evil but to create another. In this imperfect world of ours, he is content with the good, until time and circumstances favour him in his aspirations after the better.

A mind filled with abstract ideas and inflated with conceit, is ripe for mischief.

There are two peaceable powers: Right and Decency.

The adversaries of a good cause are like men who strike at the coals of a large fire. They scatter the coals and propagate the fire.

If you claim services without granting rights, you must pay for them, and very liberally too.

None are more hopelessly enslaved than those who falsely believe they are free.

Which is the best government? That which teaches self-government.

We cannot stop to inquire what right we have to the government. We govern, that is all. We care not whether or no the people have a right to depose us, but we are very careful not to lead them into temptation.

There could be no objection to the abolition of death, if that measure were practicable. The abolition of capital punishment has no future. If once abolished, we shall after a time introduce it again.

The abolition of capital punishment leads to Lynch law and Vendetta.

All laws are made by old men. Young men and women lean towards exceptions ; old men alone affect the rule.

I could not be friendly to the French Revolution, for its atrocities touched me too nearly, and disgusted me almost every hour and every day, while its beneficial results were at that time beyond the range of my vision. Nor could I look on with indifference, while attempts were making in Germany to effect that by artificial means, which in France was effected by a great and imperative necessity.

But I have never been a champion of arbitrary power. I was, moreover, firmly convinced that a great Revolution is never chargeable on the people, but always on the government. Revolutions are altogether impossible under a just and energetic government, which meets the spirit of the age with suitable reforms, instead of resisting it, until the people enforce those changes of which they feel the necessity.

Because I hated Revolutions, they called me a friend of existing institutions. The title is equivocal, and I protest against it. If all these institutions were excellent, good, and just, the case would be different. But since by the side of many good things, there are also things bad, un-

just, and imperfect, a man cannot be a friend of existing institutions without also becoming the champion of those which are bad and antiquated.

Time is continually on the move, and human affairs change their aspect every fifty years. An institution which was perfect in 1800, may be a great nuisance in 1850.

And, again, nothing can be good for a nation, but what springs from its own kernel, and from its own general necessity, without imitating any other nation. For, what is meat to one people, may be poison for another. All attempts to introduce some outlandish novelty, of which the necessity does not spring from the kernel of the nation itself, are absurd, and all such revolutions will be void of result, for they are without God, who stands aloof from such bungling patch-work. But if a great reform be really wanted in a nation, it will have God's help, and with it, success. *He* was with Christ and his first disciples, for the new doctrine of love was a necessity of the age. *He* too was with Luther, for the purification of Christ's doctrine from the dross of priestcraft was also a want of the age. Nor were those two great Powers friends of existing institutions; they were both alive to the necessity of removing the old leaven of untruth, injustice, and imperfection.

All retrogressive epochs, and all that tend to dissolution, are subjective; all progressive epochs have an objective tendency.

In former ages the reign of Fancy was exclusive and paramount; all other faculties of the mind were subject to *her*. The tables have since been turned. Fancy, in our days, is the slave, and wretched and wobegone in and by means of its servitude. Former ages had their ideas in creations of Fancy; our own time narrows her ideas into abstractions, (*begriffe.*) The great views of life were, in those days, incorporated into forms, into deities; we reduce these, too, into abstractions. The ancients were eminently fertile in productions; we are great in destruction and criticism.

Ethics are not the result of reflection; they are beautiful nature, created and innate. In a greater or lesser degree they are Nature's gift to all; in a high degree they belong to a few highly-gifted minds. Such minds reveal their divinity by great deeds or doctrines; and this divinity, acting upon mankind by the beauty of its revelation, excited their love, and most powerfully attracted them to adoration and imitation.

But the value of the ethical Good and Beautiful was by experience and wisdom raised to consciousness, while the Evil showed its nature in its consequences, by destroying the happiness of individuals and of humanity. But the *Noble* and the *Right* stepped in as the founders and preservers of individual and universal happiness. Thus did the ethical Beautiful come to be a doctrine, and thus was it revealed to, and spread over, all nations.

The leading idea of Lutheranism rests on a respectable basis—on the contrast between law and gospel, and on the mediation between these two extremes.

And thus to Luther is the Old and New Testament the symbol of the great and ever new World-Being. On the one hand, the *Law* yearning for *Charity*, and on the other, *Charity* yearning back to *Law*, and completing the same, but not from her own might and power, but by means of Faith—of exclusive Faith—in the all-revealing and all-things-working Messiah.

These few words prove that Lutheranism can never return to Papacy, and that it is not opposed to reason, whenever reason will condescend to consider the Bible as the mirror of the

universe. This, indeed, ought to be an easy task.

The best of it is, that we become at length convinced of the fact that many things, though essentially opposed to one another, can and must exist side by side. The world-spirit is more tolerant than is generally believed.

Indian philosophy—if, indeed, the Englishman's account can be trusted—is by no means an extraordinary thing and one foreign to our own philosophy: on the contrary, it contains all the epochs through which it is ours to live. As children we are Sensualists; we are Idealists when we love, and when we invest the beloved object with qualities which are foreign to its nature Love fails; we doubt fidelity itself, and we become Sceptics before we are aware of it. The remainder of life is a matter of indifference to us; we enjoy little and regret less, and we end, as the Indian philosophers do, in Quietism.

As for German philosophy, there are two important objects which ought to be accomplished. Kant wrote the 'Critique of Pure Reason;' he did much, but he did not all. Now is the time for an able and eminent man

to write a Critique of the Senses and of Common Sense. If that were done equally well, there would be little to desire in German philosophy.

I have read Monsieur Degerando's 'Histoire Comparative des Systèmes de Philosophie.' It so reminded me of my life and thought from early youth. For all possible opinions pass, from time to time, through our heads, some historically, some productively. The perusal of this work impressed, again, upon my mind—and the author, too, says as much—that the various modes of thought result from the various qualities of men, and that consequently a general and uniform conviction is simply an impossibility. The great thing, after all, is to know on which side we stand, and where. This knowledge makes us satisfied with ourselves and just to others.

Whenever philosophy aims at *separation* and *division*, I confess that I cannot get on with it, and I daresay it has sometimes done me harm by obstructing my natural progress. But when it *unites*, or rather when it confirms our instinctive feeling of an identity with nature, when it

strengthens that feeling, and converts it into profound and calm contemplation, in whose perennial σύγκρισις and διάκρισις we lead a divine though forbidden life—then, indeed, is philosophy welcome to me.

I have no objection to practical men (who, if they do great things, are, and will be ‘des philosophes sans le savoir’) entertaining a kind of objection against philosophy, especially against the philosophy of our time. But this objection ought not to grow into an aversion, it ought to dissolve into a quiet, cautious inclination. Unless this is the case, the man will find himself, before he is aware of it, on the road to Philistery,* which is the worse for a clear-headed person, since he most awkwardly shuns that better company which alone might assist him in his struggles to advancement.

Most strange are the doctrines with which the Mohammedans begin their education. In the place of a religious basis, they inculcate the con-

* It is very difficult to convey to the English mind an idea of the disgust and horror with which the Germans of all classes consider the ‘Philister,’ or common-place man, and fly from the imputation of ‘Philistery.’ A ‘Philister,’ properly speaking, is a compound of common-place, snobbism, and old fogyism.—ED.

viction that nothing can happen to us but what has been fore-ordained by an all-guiding Deity. By this conviction they are prepared for all the eventualities of life ; indeed, they scarcely want more to strengthen and quiet them.

I will not here discuss the truth or fallacy, the usefulness or hurtfulness, of this doctrine, but I will say that we all have something of this faith, even without the benefit of a Mohammedan education. The soldier in battle believes that no bullet will touch him, except the one on which his name is written ; and without this belief, how can he possibly be bold and cheerful in the midst of danger ? The Christian doctrine, ' not a sparrow falls from the roof without the will of your Father,' comes from the same source, and reveals a Providence even in the smallest affairs of life, one without whose will and permission nothing whatever can be done.

Again, the Mohammedans commence their instruction in philosophy by teaching that there is no affirmation which cannot be denied ; and thus they train their youth to find out and express a reasonable negative to every affirmation, which must make them very ready in speech and thought.

But after the contrary has been proved of

every position, there must come a *doubt* as to which of the two is really true. The mind cannot rest in doubt, nor can it remain in it, and it proceeds to a closer investigation and examination, which, if conducted in a perfect manner, leads to *certainty*, the goal in which man finds perfect satisfaction.

The philosophical system of the Mohammedans is a capital measure for ourselves and others to ascertain the exact degree of spiritual virtue at which we have arrived.

Lessing's polemical instincts cause him to be at home in the regions of contradictions and doubts; he is great in distinctions, and his acuteness of reasoning is of the greatest use in that particular sphere. As for myself, I dare say I shall be found quite different. I never dealt in contradictions; and as for doubts, I sought to get over them in my own mind. I have given utterance only to the results at which I arrived.

The great ideas of freedom, nation, and country, are in us; they are part of our being, and no one can get rid of them. Germany is next to my heart. I have frequently felt

deep grief in thinking of the German people, of their respectability as individuals, and of their wretchedness as a whole. To compare the German people with other nations, excites painful feelings, which I endeavour to conquer at all risks, and it is in science and in art I found the wings which raise me above so much sorrow. For science and art belong to the *world*; the limits of nationality fall down before them. Theirs is, however, after all but cold comfort, and one that cannot make up for the conscious pride of being a member of a great, strong, respected nation. Some such comfort too may be found, in the faith in the future of Germany. I cling to that faith. The German people has the promise of a future, and it has a future. The fate of the Germans—as Napoleon said—is by no means fulfilled. If theirs had been no other mission beyond destroying the Roman Empire, and creating and arranging a new order of things, they would, long before this, have perished. Their very existence, and, indeed, their existence in strength and usefulness, proves to my mind, that theirs is a great destiny, and one which is even greater than the giant work of the destruction of the Roman Empire and the creation of the Middle Ages, since at the present

time they are more advanced in civilization. But the eye of man cannot foresee the time and the occasion ; the power of man avails not to hasten it on. All we can do as individuals is this, that each one according to his talents, his learning, and his station, shall seek to increase, to strengthen, and to spread the civilization of the people, that it may not lag in the rear of other nations, and that at least in this one respect it be pre-eminent, so that the people's mind may not wither, but remain fresh and cheerful ; that the people may not live in fear and trembling, but remain capable of great deeds on the day of their glory.

‘The ancient Germans,’ says Guizot, ‘gave us the idea of personal liberty, which was theirs above all other nations.’ Is he not right, and is not this idea strong within us to this very day? It made the reformation and the ‘Burschen’ conspiracy on the Wartburg ; it wrought many good things and many follies. It is also the cause of the woful variety of our literature ; it spurs our poets on to originality, for every one of them believes that he must needs pave a fresh road for others to walk on ; and it causes likewise the seclusion and isolation of our men of

science, each of whom stands alone, and construes the world from his isolated position. The French and the English on the other hand, stick close together and follow one another. They harmonize in a way in their dress and behaviour. They are afraid of being singular, lest they should become conspicuous or even ridiculous. But among the Germans, every man follows the leanings of his own mind; every one seeks to satisfy himself rather than others, for in every one there is, as Guizot justly remarks, the idea of personal liberty, which as I said before, creates many excellent things, and gives also rise to many absurdities.

I fear not, but believe in the future unity of Germany; our highroads of the present day and our railroads of the future, will have their effect. But above all, let the Germans be united in loving one another. And again, let them be united against all foreign enemies. Let the country be so united that the German 'Thaler' and 'Groschen' have their value throughout the realm; let it be so united that my portmanteau may pass through the whole of the thirty-six states without being opened by custom-house officers. Let it be so united that the passport of

a Weimar citizen may not be rejected by the police of a large neighbouring state, as being the passport of a *foreigner*. Let there be no mention of Inland and Outland among the German States. Let Germany for the future be united in measures, in weight, in trade, and in observances, and in a hundred things besides, which I cannot and will not specify.

But it is a mistake to believe that the unity of Germany consists in our great country having but one great capital, and that this one great capital will at once promote the development of a few great talents, and the prosperity of the mass of the people.

The body politic has indeed been compared to an animal body with many limbs, and thus may the capital of a state be compared to the heart, which transmits life and comfort to all its limbs far and near. But if the limbs be very far from the heart the life transmitted to them will be felt more and more faint. A clever Frenchman, Dupin, I believe, has made a map illustrating the civilization of France, which according to its greater or lesser degree in the departments, he has marked with light and dark colours. Now we see in this map, especially in the southern provinces, which are far from the capital,

some departments marked entirely in black, to denote the mental darkness which prevails in those parts. Could this ever be if 'la belle France' had ten centres instead of one?

In what does the greatness of Germany lie, unless it be in her admirable popular culture, which is equally diffused through all parts of the country? And is not that culture created, preserved, and fostered by the various princely courts? Suppose there had been these many centuries but two capitals in Germany—Vienna and Berlin—or suppose there had been but one, I should be glad to know where the culture of Germany might be found, together with the general prosperity which is always intimately connected with mental cultivation.

Germany has above twenty universities, distributed over all parts of the country, and in the same way we have above a hundred public libraries. There are also a great number of collections of objects of art and natural history, for every one of the princes fosters good and beautiful things in his immediate vicinity. There is an abundance of gymnasiums and technical institutions. Indeed there is scarcely a German village without its school. Now, what is the state of

things in France with regard to public instruction ?

And, again, there are a great many German theatres—above seventy, I think—and these are important means of popular education. The love and practice of music and song is nowhere so general as in Germany. Now, think of cities such as Dresden, München, Stuttgart, Kassel, Braunschweig, Hanover, and the like. Think of the great elements of life which these cities foster within them ; think of their action on the neighbouring provinces, and then tell me whether all this could be if those cities had not, from time immemorial, been the seats of princes ?

Frankfort, Bremen, Hamburg, and Lübek, are great and splendid cities ; their influence on the prosperity of Germany is immeasurable. But could they remain what they are if, deprived of their sovereignty, they were to be degraded to the rank of provincial towns in some great German empire ? I have reason to doubt it.

The Germans have that peculiarity that they cannot take anything in the way it is given to them. Offer them the handle of the knife, and they will say it has no edge ; hold out the blade, and they will cry out that they are hurt.

They have read so much, and are not open to new forms; it is only after they have become familiar with a new thing that they are really clever, good, and truly amiable. As an author I have consequently always been isolated; my old books alone were effective, and I could not obtain sympathy for my new productions.

Is it their derivation, or their soil, or their free constitution, or national education—who can tell? But it is a fact that the English appear to have the advantage of many other nations.

There is in them nothing turned and twisted, and no half measures and after-thoughts. Whatever they are, they are always ‘complete’ men. Sometimes they are ‘complete’ fools, I grant you, but even their folly is a folly of some substance and weight.

The enjoyment of personal liberty, the conscious pride of the English name, and the respect it commands from all other nations, these are a benefit even to the children, who in their families and in their schools are treated with greater respect, and left in the enjoyment of more happiness and freedom than the children in Germany.

In our good city of Weimar, I need but look out of the window to ascertain the exact state of public education among us. The other day, when the streets were full of snow, and my neighbour's children brought out their little sledges, just to try them, they were scared away by a policeman. Poor little things! I saw them run away as fast as they were able. And just now, when the sun invites them from their homes, and when they and their little companions would gladly make their games, I see that they are constrained and anxious. They are never safe, and always afraid of the approach of some official dignitary. If a boy smacks his whip, or if he sings or shouts, the police are sure to be at his elbow to spoil his pleasure. With us every one does all he can to tame the children down, and to eradicate in them all nature, originality, and freedom of impulse, so that in the end nothing is left but philistery.

Scarcely one of my days passes without some visit from two or three travellers. But if I were to say that I am favourably impressed with the personal appearance, especially of some young men of letters from the north-east of

Germany, I should say what is not true. Short-sighted, pale, flat-chested—youth without youth—such are the chief features of all those whose acquaintance I make; and from their conversation I find that the things which please and interest men of our stamp, appear to them most trivial and absurd; that they are over head and ears in the Idea, and that only the highest problems of speculation can possibly interest them. There is no trace in them of sound sense and enjoyment of sensual (that is to say, of created) nature; all feelings and pleasures of youth have been killed within them, and can never come to life again. For if a man is not young at twenty, what is he likely to be at forty?

If it were possible to fashion the Germans after an English model, by imparting to them less philosophy and more energy, less theory and more practice, it would go a great way towards our salvation, nor should we have to wait for the revelation of the personal majesty of a second Barbarossa.* A great deal, indeed, might be done by the people, by schools, and domestic educa-

* Alluding to the popular superstition of Barbarossa's sleep in Kyffhausen Mountain, and his future advent.—ED.

tion, and a great deal, too, might be done by the princes, and those who are near to them.

Thus, for instance, I think it unjustifiable that they should require so large an amount of theoretical-learned knowledge in the young men who study with a view of entering the service of the state. This practice makes them old before their time, in body as well as in mind. And afterwards, when they enter practical life, they know no end of philosophy, and all sorts of learned matters, but what they know they cannot practise within the limited sphere of their office. It is mere rubbish, and they cast it aside. But what they most require, that they have lost. They want that energy of body and mind which is indispensable for an effectual discharge of the practical duties of real life.

Besides, is there no need of charity and benevolence in the life of a public functionary, and in his mode and manner of treating the subjects of the state? And how is it possible for benevolence to dwell in a morbid mind, and in a sickly body? and that is the way with all these men. Chained as they are to the writing-desk, one half of them become broken in body, and consigned to the demon of hypochondria. The rulers of Germany ought to provide for future

generations and to save them, at least, from a similar curse.

Let us, however, hope and trust, that the next century may find us vastly different, and by that time, instead of being abstract students and philosophers, we shall have risen to be *men*.

The first look at the world, by the mind's eye, as well as by the bodily organs of vision, conveys no distinct impression, either to our heads or to our hearts. We see things without perceiving them, and it takes a long time before we learn to understand the things we see.

The greatest men whom I have known—men, whose glance embraced the heavens and the earth, were very humble, and aware of the manner in which they had risen to such eminence.

I have always been convinced that we are either not known, or not understood, in our progress through the world.

In youth we are none the worse for error ; but it ought to be discarded before we arrive at a maturer age.

Our trials grow with our years.

We are not imposed upon, but we deceive ourselves.

Our senses do not deceive us, but our judgment does.

Those only who know little, can be said to know anything. The greater the knowledge the greater the doubt.

A piece of wood burns, because it has the matter for burning within it. A man comes to be famous, because he has the matter for fame within him. To seek for, or hunt after fame, is a vain endeavour. By clever management and various artificial means, a man may indeed succeed in creating for himself a sort of name. But if he lacks real inward value, all his management comes to nought, and will scarcely outlive the day.

What man perceives and feels in himself, appears to me the negative part of his existence. He is more alive to the things he wants, than to those he possesses; he has a quicker perception of

fear than of pleasure, for in joy and comfort the mind loses the consciousness of self, and so does the body, while disagreeable sensations throw both mind and body back upon themselves.

Whenever the *perfect* vanishes from our senses, our powers of reminiscence fail to replace it, and we may consider ourselves fortunate, if at the time, it wrought the progress of our cultivation.

That is the true season of love, when we believe that we alone can love, that no one could ever have loved so before us, and that no one will love in the same way after us.

We ought, at an early age, to know that it is wise to avoid all things which we cannot appropriate in enjoyment, and by which we cannot contribute to our own enjoyment, and to that of others.

It would appear that our nature is not, for any length of time, capable of perfect resignation. Hope will make its way into the mind, and with hope, activity, and with activity, the realization of hope.

Frantic and passionate happiness, in which we lose our own selves, will also darken the reminiscence of those we love. But when you are fully conscious and very tranquil, your mind is open to a peculiar sympathy, and all dead friendships and loves rise into life again.

There are things which you do not see only because you do not look at them. As soon as you have a clear insight into the circumstances, you will be interested in the objects. Every one likes activity, and good men find pleasure in order and judicious arrangement, and delight in promoting the tranquil dominion of the right and the just.

It is in the nature of public affairs that they multiply under the hands of those that administer them.

To be a hypochondriac, means to be lost in the subject. When I resign all objects, I cannot believe that *they* will allow me to be an object, and I resign them because I believe them to believe me no object.

As age comes on we lose the sense for details, by becoming accustomed to results.

Nemo ante obitum beatus, though an historical phrase, is one which means very little. It had better stand: 'Expect trials to the last.'

Reflection on our bodies or our minds is usually a sign of ill health.

Happy he who can connect the end of his life with its commencement.

Age makes us tolerant; I never see a fault which I myself did not commit.

We live on and perish by the past.

Old age loses one of the chief rights of man. We judge an old man with indulgence.

To live long, is to survive many! Such is the odious burden of the vaudeville of my life; it is ever returning, it annoys me, and yet it urges me on to fresh endeavours.

The circle of persons which surrounds me appears to me as a *convolus* of sybillinic leaves, of which first one and then another, consumed by the fire of life, dissolves into air, while the remainder increase in value as they grow less

and less. Let us work on until we, one first and the other afterwards, on the call of the World-Spirit, return into Ether; and may then *He* whose life is eternal vouchsafe to grant us a new sphere of action, one analogous to the one in which we have been tried. And if, in his paternal goodness, He adds the remembrance of the good and just we desired and performed on this earth, we shall surely the more effectually take our place in the movements of the world-machine.

To live long, is to outlive many men, events, and things,—men whom we loved or hated, or for whom we did not care,—kingdoms, capitals, forests, and trees, which we planted in youth. We outlive our own selves, and we have reason to be grateful if only a few gifts of body and mind remain in our possession. And all these passing evils we can bear; for since the Eternal is present to us at every moment, we feel none of the evils of this passing time.

It is but rarely that the time agrees with its creatures. Co-existence provokes contrast. It is therefore a great comfort to authors, that every day gives birth to fresh and future readers.

I am not born to be a tragic poet, for my nature is conciliating. Pure tragedy has no interest for me, for it is based on irreconcilable contrast, and such contrasts strike me as eminently absurd in this dull world of ours.

The mind is always thrown back upon itself, whenever we treat mankind in their way and not in our own. It is an analogous case with the performer and his instrument.

It is indeed true that what I really and truly know I know but for myself. Any attempt at production exposes me to conditions, limitations, and contradictions. The safest way to proceed, is to convert all that is in us and of us into an action, leaving the rest of the world to talk and discuss it according to their ability and power.

Men of profound thoughts and earnest minds, are at a great disadvantage with the public.

Men of genius, after all, are not immortal. What a comfort for mediocrity!

The greatest man has at least one weakness,

which forms a connecting link between him and his age.

Great talents are essentially conciliating.

It is a terrible thing to see a great man made much of by a party of blockheads.

A clever man is the best encyclopædia.

Humour is one of the elements of genius, but if it predominates it becomes a make-shift. Humour accompanies the decline of art, which it destroys and annihilates.

What is genius but that productive power which leads to actions that can show their faces before God and men, and which for that very reason have results and duration ! All Mozart's works are of this kind ; there is in them a productive power which works on from generation to generation, and which it will take a very long time to exhaust and consume. The same may be said of other great composers and artists. Phidias and Raphael influenced the centuries after them, and so did Albert Dürer and Holbein. The man who first invented the forms and propor-

tions of old-German architecture, so that in the course of time it was possible to build a Strasburg Münster and a Cologne Cathedral, that man too was a genius, for his thoughts have retained their productive power to this day and hour.

Luther was a great genius; his influence has outlived many days and years, and there is no saying how long it will last. Lessing declined the honourable title of a genius: but his permanent influence speaks against him.* We have in our literature other names, and have even some of them great ones, whose bearers, while they lived, passed as geniuses. But their influence terminated with their lives, and they were therefore less important than they themselves and others with them believed. For, as I have already said, there is no genius without a permanent power of production, no matter in what art, profession, or trade. It is all the same whether

* Lessing never declined the title in the sense which Goethe intimates. In his days Germany was overrun with a set of dirty, dissolute, and in many instances ignorant persons, who arrogated to themselves the name of 'geniuses,' and who on the strength of that name thought proper to violate all rules of public and private decency. It was as a protest against this disgraceful mob of literary vagabonds (among whom were some of Goethe's early friends and associates) that Lessing said, 'if a man dares to call *me* a genius I'll box his ears.'—ED.

a man is genial in science—as Oken and Humboldt,—or in war and politics—as Frederick, Peter, and Napoleon—or whether he is eminent in song—as Beranger. The great thing is, that the idea—the *aperçu*—the action be alive, and capable of life for ages after.

Nor are the powers of production to be computed by the number of the productions and actions which emanate from a man. Some of our poets are considered to be eminently productive, for they publish one volume of poetry after another. But to my mind those persons are not productive, if what they utter can neither live nor last. Goldsmith, on the other hand, wrote a few poems only—indeed, their *number* is scarcely worth mentioning. Nevertheless, I consider *him* a very productive poet, for his poems have a life of their own, and retain their position.

The harmonic development of the human faculties is indeed desirable, and most precious in its way. But we are not born for it. Every one must form himself as an individual being, and he must try to understand the totality.

It matters nothing whatever in what sphere our culture commences, and from what point we

direct our cultivation into practical life. The great thing is, that there *is* a sphere, and that there *is* a point. A productive culture, emanating from unity, suits the young man; and even at a riper age, when our progress is more historical and has more breadth, we must again narrow that breadth, and contract it into an unity.

It matters little whether a man be mathematically, or philologically, or artistically cultivated, so he be but cultivated. Cultivation, however, does not consist in these sciences alone. The sciences are, so to say, the senses by the means of which we perceive objects; but philosophy, the science of sciences, is the *sensus communis*. It were an absurd attempt if a man were to try to compensate for hearing by signs and for signs by hearing, and if he professed to see the sounds instead of hearing them. It is equally absurd to compensate and supply by mathematics the other modes of perception, and, *vice versá*, the same in all others. In our days there are many fantastic fools who want positive knowledge, and who, by a fanciful combination of the bearings of the various sciences,

pretend to a deep insight into the secrets of each branch of knowledge.

I have often been told, on the occasion of the publication of some important scientific work, that 'whatever there is true in it is not new, and what is new is not true.' This means in plain language: 'we understand what we know, but that which we ought to know, we do not understand.'

A professional man of science will, if need be, deny the existence of his five senses. These gentlemen care very little for the living idea of an object; all they care for is, what has or has not been said about it.

There are three classes of readers: some enjoy without judgment; others judge without enjoyment; and some there are who judge while they enjoy, and enjoy while they judge. The latter class reproduces the work of art on which it is engaged. Its numbers are very small.

He who is always bent upon perceiving the objects in himself, and not himself in the objects, must needs make progress, for he

strengthens his perceptive faculty, and improves the choice of the objects he incorporates with himself.

A scamp is a scamp to the end of the chapter ; and the daily communion with the greatness of ancient characters will not avail a petty mind, nor raise it one inch above its level. But a man of a generous mind, with the God's gift of the germs of future greatness of character and majesty of mind, receives a glorious impetus from the acquaintance and the daily communion with the lofty characters of Greek and Roman antiquity, and he will from day to day grow up towards like greatness.

The tutors of young princes are like men whose office it is to regulate and watch over a rivulet on its progress from the mountain to the valley. All they care for is to prevent mischief for the time being and so long as they are responsible. Hence they construct dykes, and convert the stream into an ornamental lake. But when the young man comes to be of age the dyke is broken, and the waters rush violently and destructively forward, and carry down mud and stones. It quite startles one, and makes one

think what a mighty stream it is, until the surplus is spent, and the stream shrinks again into a rivulet, which flows on in a very commonplace way, exactly such as nature made it. The very same may be said of private education, if it be over rigorous.

The dark ages of ancient Germany are as unprofitable for *us* as the Servian 'lieder,' and other barbarous people's songs. You may read them, and you may for a time be interested in them, but you soon have enough of this sort of thing. Our own passions and misfortunes are quite enough to darken our mind; we need not hunt for sadness in the obscurity of a barbarous antiquity. We want joy and light, and we ought to turn to epochs in art and literature in which extraordinary men obtained perfect cultivation, which so saturated them with bliss, as to enable them to impart the happiness of their minds to others also.

I should never have been aware of the wretched littleness of men's minds; I should never have known how very little they care for really great objects, if I had not tried them in the hours of my labours in the natural sciences.

I now understand that the majority consider science merely as a means of subsistence, and that they worship error itself, so it but feeds them.

The same may be said of general literature. Great objects and a lively sense of truth and justice are very rare among our men of letters. They pet and puff one another; they are disgusted with what is truly great, and would gladly put it down, that they themselves may become more conspicuous. Such is the mob of them; and the few distinguished individuals among them are not much better.

We want such a man as Lessing was! For what made *him* great but his character, his perseverance? We have some men that are quite as clever and gifted as he was—but where is another character like his? A great many of them I know, have wit and learning, but they have vanity too, and to gain the admiration of the dull crowd, are ever ready to profane all that is respectable and sacred.

Hence Madame de Genlis was right in protesting against Voltaire's licence and impertinence. For after all, however witty his writings may be, they can do no good; they are not by any means a basis on which to construct or

establish anything. Indeed they can do much harm by confusing the minds of men.

And after all, what do we know? and how far does all our wit carry us? It is our duty, not to solve the problems of this world, but to ascertain where they commence, and to remain within the limits of the comprehensible.

Our faculties are too narrow to compass the action of the universe; it would be a vain endeavour to try to arrange it according to our reason. Human reason and divine reason are vastly different.

Nor is it right to utter the higher maxims without absolute necessity. Some maxims there are which should remain treasured up in our hearts, but they may and will shed their splendour on our actions, like the tempered rays of a hidden sun.

The French consider Mirabeau as their Hercules, and they are quite right. But they forget that the Colossus too consists of single parts; the Hercules of antiquity is a collective being. A grand type of his own deeds and of the deeds of others.

Properly speaking, we are all of us collective beings. There is no denying the fact, however disagreeable it may be. For, how little are we by ourselves, and how little can we call our own! We must all accept and learn from those that went before us, and from those that live with us. Even the greatest *Genius* would make but little way, if he were to create and construct everything out of his own mind. A great many persons will not understand this; they would be thorough originals, and are consequently thoroughly benighted. I know of certain artists, who boast that they never were guided by a master, and that they are indebted to their own genius alone. The fools! To think that this sort of thing would do! Does not the world assail and influence them at each step, and does it not, in spite of their own stupidity, influence them for good? I protest if such an artist were merely to pass through my rooms, and if he were only to cast a strong look or so at the sketches of the great artists which ornament them, he would, if indeed there were any genius in him, leave the house, a better and wiser man.

And what good is there in us, except the power and the will to attract the powers of the

world around us, and to make them subservient to our higher purposes ! I may here speak of myself, and humbly say how I feel. I have, indeed, in the course of my long life done many things, on which I have some reason to pride myself. But, to be quite honest, what had I of *my own*, except the power and the will to see and to hear, to distinguish and to select, and afterwards to inspire the things I saw and heard with some wit, and to reproduce them with some cleverness ! My works spring, not from my own wisdom alone, but from hundreds of things and persons, that gave the matter for them. There were fools and sages, long-headed men and narrow-minded men, children and young and old men and women, that told me how they felt, and what they thought : how they lived and laboured, and what was the amount, and what were the results of their experience ; I had but to hold out my hands, and reap a harvest which others had sown for me.

It is very absurd to ask whether a man's knowledge comes from himself or from others, or whether he acts alone, or by and through other men. The important thing is to have a great aim, and to possess aptitude, and the per-

severance to attain it. All other considerations are insignificant, compared to this one.

Mirabeau was, therefore, perfectly justified in making all the use he could of the outward world, and its capacities. His was the gift to discern talent, and talent was attracted by the demon of his mighty nature. Thus did talent become his servant, and thus did it happen that he was surrounded by a crowd of distinguished men, whom he inspired, and who worked out his ends. And in this working *with* others, and *by* others lay his genius, his originality, and his greatness.

Originality provokes originality.

The natives of old Europe are all badly off. Our affairs are by far too artificial and complicated; our diet and mode of life want nature, and our social intercourse is without love and benevolence. Every one is smooth and polite, but no one is bold enough to be candid and true, and an honest man, a man of natural learning and sentiments, is in a very awkward position. It makes one wish to be born in the South Sea Islands, as a so-called savage, if it were only to get a pure and unadulterated enjoyment of human life.

Everything just now is *ultra*; every body transcends irresistibly in thought as well as in action. No one understands himself or the place where he stands, or the matter he attempts to fashion. Pure simplicity is out of the question, but there are plenty of absurdities.

Young men are over-excited at an early age, and swept down by the whirlpool of time. Wealth and speed—these are the world's idols, and the objects of all its desires. Railroads, steam-boats, stage-coaches, and all possible facilities of communication are the great aim and end of the civilized world in its desire for over-civilization, which must lead to permanent mediocrity. And, indeed, it is the aim of this generalizing age, to make a middling civilization general; this too is the aim of Lancaster's educational method, and of many other methods and contrivances.

This indeed is a good time for able heads, for ready practical men, who, gifted with some sort of *savoir faire*, feel their superiority as compared to the crowd, although their gifts are by no means of the highest order.

The Immorality of the age is a standing topic of complaint with some men. But if any one

likes to be moral, I can see nothing in the age to prevent him.

I honour and love the *Positive*, on which I myself take my stand, for each century confirms it more and more, and it is the solid basis of our life and our works. But, on the other hand, I delight not in scepticism, but in a direct attack on usurped authority. It may have lasted for centuries, for it could do no harm to an opaque and stupid people, which without such authority, might have been worse off; but, in the fulness of time, when truth becomes a necessity, since it gives us that which is decidedly useful, I care not what blows are dealt to the right and to the left, against old authority. And though it fall, I shall not be dismayed, but look on to see what the view will be after the removal of all the old hedges and obstructions.

Every epoch may be compared to a picnic party, to which every one contributes his share according to his capabilities, and the likings of his friends. Or, it may be compared to an illumination, where humble lamps burn at the side of the most brilliant stars and crowns.

Malicious attempts to ruin the reputation of a great man, serve frequently to enhance it. They point him out to the world ; and since the world is, if not just, at least indifferent, it will by degrees discover the good qualities of the man, whom his enemies sought to paint in the blackest colours. There is also in the public a spirit of contradiction to blame as well as to praise ; and, on the whole, a man need but to *be* to the best of his abilities, and he will occasionally *appear* to his advantage ; if, indeed—for that is the important point—the time is not too critical, and if malice be not over-powerful at a time when its efforts may crush.

If you would keep your temper, pray avoid all theoretical discussions with Frenchmen. They cannot understand that there should be anything in a man unless it has come to him from without. *Mounier*, for instance, told me ‘that the *ideal* was composed of many beautiful parts.’ I asked him where he got his idea of the beautiful parts ; and how he came to desire a beautiful totality ; and whether the term of *composition* was not too low and altogether inapplicable to that operation of genius, in which it makes use of the elements of experience ?

But to all these questions he had answers in his own *language*, for he assured me that *une sorte de création* had always been attributed to genius.

It is the same with all their discussions; they always make a decisive start with a ratiocinative idea; and if you transfer the question to a higher region, they show you that for such relations they have something like the *term*, but they never once stop to inquire whether or not this term is in contradiction with their first proposition.

There is a way of getting over French pride, for it is akin to vanity. But English pride is invulnerable, for it is based on the majesty of money.

Though sufficiently busy with other labours, I have now and then been attracted by the productions of modern French literature, and on these occasions I have had my thoughts about the Simonian religion. The heads of that sect are very able men; they are intimately acquainted with the necessities of our time, and they know, besides, how to give expression to what they desire. But whenever they presume

to remove abuses, and promote the objects of their theories, they are most wretched fellows. The fools would set themselves up as a respectable providence, and pretend that every one is to be rewarded according to his merits, so he but joins them, and becomes one of them.

What man, what association of men, can presume to promise thus much? Do they know their disciples from early youth, and have they the means of judging the progress of their activity? What, indeed, is the true test of character, unless it be its progressive development in the bustle and turmoil, in the action and reaction of daily life? Who can dare to determine the value of accidents, of impulses, and reminiscences? Who would estimate the voluntary affinities? Whoever would determine what a man *is*, let him first ascertain what that man has been, and how he came to be what he is. Such impertinent generalities are by no means new; we all have known such; they pass and return at certain periods, and we must needs bear with them.

Understanding and reason are formal faculties; the substance, the matter, comes from the heart. If men are the representatives of un-

derstanding and reason, they are the *form*; woman, as heart, is the *matter*.

The two sexes are cruel to one another, and this cruelty is at times in every one, though it may not always be manifested. The cruelty of men is that of pleasure; the cruelty of women is the cruelty of ingratitude, of indifference, of tormenting, &c.

It is a peculiarity of women to grasp at ready-made and finished views and opinions, and to turn them to account. They take man's knowledge and experience ready-made to ornament themselves and the things which surround them. The keeping of silk worms, the spinning, dying, and finishing off of raw silk, are not much in their way; but (to follow up our allegory) they take the silk in a highly-finished state, and work it into flowers, or fashion it into dress for their ornament. Hence, they do not follow us in our deductions and constructions, however taking they may sometimes appear to them. They stick to the result, and if they follow, they cannot imitate and do the same in a similar case. Man creates and procures, and woman puts it to use; this too, in an intellectual

sense, is the law for the two natures. Whatever, therefore, you offer to woman, let it be finished. Hence, too, they are the most desirable public for a man who deals in dogmas, and who has wit enough to make his discourse pleasant and impressive.

We lose the best part of life if we are cut off from communication and sympathy. Sympathy is most needed when it is scarcely ever to be had—namely, in affairs of the heart.

Though we may not in all things agree with extraordinary men, they may still have our love and admiration.

To exert a moral influence at a distance, is a dangerous thing. If you speak to a friend, you can understand his situation, and temper your words to the necessities of the moment. At a distance the right word is either not said, or if said, it comes at the wrong moment.

A vain man can never be altogether rude. Desirous as he is of pleasing, he fashions his manners after those of others.

The retreat from a large sphere of action into a lesser and narrower one ought to be a matter of mature consideration. Either of these modes of existence has its peculiar advantages; in an extensive sphere our influence reaches farther, but in a smaller one it is more certain in its aims and purer in its effects: the impress of our own mind meets us so much sooner.

We ought not to isolate ourselves, for we cannot remain in a state of isolation. Social intercourse makes us the more able to bear with ourselves and with others.

Even the weakest man is strong enough to enforce his convictions.

The good we do is usually done *Clam, Vi et Precario*.

We are obstinate creatures, resisting friendly compulsion, submitting to hostile tyranny.

Every man has his peculiarities of which he cannot get rid, and yet peculiarities, the most innocent, are the ruin of many.

Instructive conversation ; suggestive silence : these are the characteristics of good society.

Our weaknesses are the true cause of our amiability.

If you have a superabundance of rooms in your house, so that some of them are untenanted from year's-end to year's-end, there is no objection to one of them being furnished in the gothic way. Madame Pancouke, in Paris, has a 'Chinese' room, and I like her for it. But I must object to the fashion of filling the apartments which are daily in use with strange and antiquated furniture. It is a kind of masquerade which cannot be of any good in the long run, and which must exert a deteriorating influence on those who dwell in such places ; for this sort of thing is in direct contradiction to the light of day in which we live,—it is the result of emptiness and hollowness of thought and sentiment, and it makes persons still more empty and hollow. There is no objection to a Turkish dress at a masquerade, but there is some objection to a man's dressing as a Turk from year's-end to year's-end. Such a man would be considered either mad or likely to become so.

There are but two ways which lead to great aims and achievements — energy and perseverance. Energy is a rare gift,—it provokes opposition, hatred, and reaction. But perseverance lies within the affordings of every one, its power increases with its progress, and it is but rarely that it misses its aim. Where perseverance is out of the question, where I cannot exert a protracted influence, I had better not attempt to exert any influence at all, for I should only disturb the organic development of affairs, and paralyze the natural remedies which they contain, without any guarantee for a more favourable result.

It matters little what sphere of action a generous mind has, so he be but familiar with that sphere, and competent in it. Our cares ought never to outrun our influence; we ought not to presume to act beyond the sphere in which God and nature established us. The more haste the less speed; to jump from the bottom of the stairs to the top is not a wise proceeding, but in our days men are over-hasty, and inclined to proceed in jumps. Let every one in his place do his duty, heedless of the confusion which far and near consumes the hours in the most vil-

lanous manner. Sympathising minds will crowd around him, and confidence and increasing intelligence extend his sphere.

The object of life is life itself—if we do but our duty to our own minds, we shall soon come to do it to the world.

He who agrees with himself agrees with others. It has struck me that I believe in the truth of those ideas only which are productive to my mind, which assimilate to my modes of thinking, and assist my progress. For it is not only possible, but also very natural, that such an idea does not assimilate to other minds,—that, instead of assisting, it impedes their progress, and that they think it wrong and erroneous. Any one who is convinced of this, will never engage in a controversy.

Few are open to conviction, but the majority of men are open to persuasion.

Pride is disgusting, if it manifest itself in contempt of others, even of the lowliest. A careless, frivolous fellow, may deal in ridicule and contempt. Without respecting himself,

how can he respect others? But a man who is conscious of his own worth, has no right to undervalue his fellow-men.

Sound and sufficient reason falls, after all, to the share of but few men, and those few men exert their influence in silence.

Real greatness and wisdom exist only in a minority. Ministers there have been who were opposed by the king and the people, and who, alone and unaided, executed their grand projects. It were vain to hope that reason should ever be popular. Passions and sentiments may possibly acquire popularity, but reason is the monopoly of a few chosen minds.

Dominion is innate in no one, and he who inherits it, must strive for it as hard and harder than any usurper.

Sentiments join man to man, opinions divide them. The former are elementary and concentrate, the latter are composite and scatter. The friendships of youth are founded on sentiment; the dissensions of age result from opinion. If we could know this at an early age, if, in

forming our own mode of thought, we could acquire a liberal view of that of others, and even of those that are opposed to ours; we should then be more tolerant, and endeavour to reunite by sentiment, what opinion divided and dispersed.

What chance have the glories of antiquity against the nothingness of every day life, privileged as it is to be present and stirring?

A practical man, who is compelled to launch into theory, cuts a very strange figure, and would be ridiculous, but for the respect to which his earnestness and candour entitle him.

Every one must think in his own way to arrive at truth, or at some species of truth which does as well to help him through life. But he ought to keep himself in hand: we are too good for pure instinct.

Truth is only in truth.

Truth is part of the man; error is part of the age. Hence it was said of a great man: 'Le malheur des temps a causé son erreur, mais

la force de son âme l'en a fait sortir avec gloire.'

To find out an error is easy ; to discover the truth is difficult. Error is on the surface, but truth dwells at the bottom of the well.

The knowledge of my own position and my relations to the world, is truth. Thus every one may have his own truth, and yet it is the same truth.

Error clings to great minds as well as to little ones. A great mind errs, because he knows of no limits. A little mind would limit the world to his own narrow range of vision.

Correction does much, but encouragement does more. Encouragement after censure, is as the sun after a shower.

Reality has but one shape ; hope is many-shaped.

He who knows no love, ought to study flattery.

Love in a narrow sphere and directed to petty and narrow objects, is fanaticism, or pedantry. At certain lengths, it strikes us as ridiculous, and ridicule is indeed the only remedy.

Justice belongs to humanity. The Gods let all do as they may; their sun shines on the righteous and the wicked; man alone aims at worthiness and merit. No one ought to enjoy what is too good for him; he ought to make himself worthy of it, and rise to its level.

Every virtue is intolerant, and every new idea plays the tyrant on its first appearance in the world.

Some virtues there are, which, like health, are only valued when lost; they are never mentioned but when they are wanted; their existence is generally presumed, and they are of no use to him who has them because they are passive and consist in patience. They seemingly denote the absence of energy and activity, but they are, in fact, the highest energy acting upon the mind, and merely reacting against insult from without. To be a hammer, appears more

laudable and creditable than to be an anvil. But what strength does it not require to resist blows falling thick, fast and without interruption?

A grand necessity elevates man ; a small one degrades him.

Necessity is cruel, but it is the only test of inward strength. Every fool may live according to his own likings.

The world is larger and smaller than we are in the habit of thinking. I move it whenever I move ; it moves me when I rest. We ought always to be prepared to move or to be moved.

Twaddle is not simply nonsense ; it may be sense in the wrong place.

Time is a great curse to those who believe that they are born to kill it.

Our actions can only be good if we know ourselves ; he who knows not his own mind, will never do the right thing in the right way, which is exactly the same as if the right thing were not right.

To look back upon the various events of life, to recall the sensations which have been ours, makes us, so to say, young again. And since the years have enlarged our views and improved our taste, there is some compensation for the energy and the fulness of early thought.

Love, charity, and science can alone make us happy and tranquil in this world of ours.

It is strange that the majority of men cannot reach a certain degree of cleverness without acquiring some sort of perversity.

‘Act considerately,’ is the practical version of ‘know thyself.’ Neither maxim is either law or demand ; it is the centre of the target at which we ought always to aim, though we cannot always hit it. It were well if men could ascertain the difference between the infinite end and the limited means, and if they could by slow degrees ascertain the exact range of their powers.

Very few there are who love others for what they really are. The majority love in others what they imagine in them ; they love their own idea in others.

The discovery of faults in those whom we believed to be perfect, is always a sad temptation to injustice. Our vanity is concerned ; we have deceived ourselves but do not acknowledge it, and insist on believing that we have been imposed upon by others. And we fling guilt, annoyance, and hatred on a person, who certainly was not the cause of our mistaking him for what he never desired to be thought. Indeed, to be quite just to the world, our opinion of it ought to be neither too high nor too low. Love and hatred are kindred sentiments, and either clouds our view.

To desire that others should sympathize with us is a great folly. I never desired any such thing. I always considered man in his individual capacity—a being to be inquired into and observed in all his peculiarities, but I certainly did not expect any sympathy. Hence I have been able to associate with all sorts of men, and this resignation alone gives the knowledge of various characters, and the ease and readiness of social intercourse. For in conversing with men whose characters are diametrically opposed to ours, our faculties are strained to the highest pitch that we may cope with them.

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To understand an author we must first understand his age. Study the age without reference to the author; return to him afterwards and his sentiments will give you the highest satisfaction.

After watching many careers and inquiring into many lives, I come to the conclusion that every one has enough to do in creating, preserving, and fostering his own interests. It is impossible to correct a man and to tell him how to act, for, after all, every one must fight his own battle, and he ought to do it in his own way.

To acknowledge every species of merit is the privilege of a liberal minded man.

Man is part of nature. He perceives, regulates, and modifies the subtlest relations of all elementary phenomena.

It was evidently intended that our bodily strength should decline from the standard of the state of nature. We were to grow weaker without, however, losing thereby: for in social life, in co-operation, and in the powers of the

mind, we possess a force far superior to the strength of the most savage animals. And certain operations of the mind succeed only in a delicate organization.

Although Nature has her fixed budget according to which she regulates her expenditure, still the calculation is by no means over exact, and there is always a surplus for ornamental purposes. To create man, Nature made a lengthened *præludium* of beings and shapes, which fall very short of man. Every one of them has a tendency which connects it with something above it. The animals wear what afterwards enters into the human composition* in neat and beautiful order as ornaments packed together in the disproportionate organs, such as horns, long tails, manes, etc. None of these things are to be found in man, who, unornamented and beautiful, through and in himself represents the idea of perfection, who is all he has and in whom use, utility, necessity, and beauty are all one and tending to the same. Since there is nothing superfluous in man, he cannot spare or lose anything, nor can he replace what

* Was hernach die Menschenbildung giebt.

he loses (excepting always hair and nails, and the minimum of reproductive power in skin, muscles, and bones). With the animals, especially with the lower ones, the power of reproduction is greater, as well as the power of generation. The power of reproduction is an undetached power of generation, and *vice versâ*.

Man is in himself the best physical apparatus. And the greatest misfortune of modern physics is, that the experiments have been separated from man, and that nature, with its power and capabilities, is being exhibited by means of artificial instruments. The same applies to calculation. Many things cannot be calculated, and other things there are which defy experiments. It is the proud privilege of man to represent to himself the otherwise irrepresentible. What is a chord, what are all its mechanical divisions, compared to the ear of the musician? And what, indeed, are the elementary phenomena of nature itself, compared to man, who has to conquer and modify them first, before he can in some way assimilate them!

But for my studies in the natural sciences, I should never have known mankind such as they

are. In no other fields of knowledge is there any getting at pure contemplation and thought, at the errors of the senses and of the understanding, at the weak and strong points of character. But there is no trifling with nature ; it is always true, grave, and severe ; it is always in the right, and the faults and errors fall to our share. It defies incompetency, but reveals its secrets to the competent, the truthful, and the pure.

Understanding avails not with nature ; we must be capable of raising ourselves to the highest reason, that we may touch the Divinity, which reveals its presence by elementary phenomena, physical as well as moral. It stands behind them, and they are its emanations.

The Godhead moves in the living and not in the dead ; it is in the growing and the changing, not in the grown and the rigid. Hence reason, in its tendency towards the divine, deals only with the growing and the living ; while the business of understanding lies with the grown and the rigid, that it may use the same for its purposes.

Mineralogy is a science for the understanding

and for practical life, for its objects are lifeless ; they do not grow into existence, and a synthesis is quite out of the question. The objects of meteorology are full of life ; we see them daily working and creating ; they pre-suppose a synthesis ; but so various are the influences, actions, and reactions, that we cannot master the synthesis, and that we most uselessly lose our time in observations and investigations. In the progress of these investigations we shape our course upon hypotheses and imaginary islands, while the real synthesis is likely to remain undiscovered. To my mind there is nothing strange in this, considering how difficult it has been to come to something like a synthesis in the simplest things, such as the theory of plants and colours.

The plant grows from knot to knot, and terminates at last in a flower and in seed. It is the same in the animal world. The caterpillar and the tapeworm grow from knot to knot, and form finally a head. In the upper animals, and in man, we have the vertebræ, one mounted on another, and terminating in a head, in which all the faculties are concentrated.

The case of individuals is also the case of

corporations. The bees, a series of individuals, combine, and their combination produces a something which makes a termination, and which may be considered as the head of the whole, namely, the *bee-king* (queen).

In a similar manner does a nation produce its heroes, who, like unto demi-gods, stand forth at its head for protection and salvation. Thus, too, did the poetical powers of the French culminate in Voltaire. These chiefs of a nation are great in their generation, and some outlive it. But the majority are replaced by others, and those that come after them remember them not.

Great thanks are due to nature for gifting each living being with certain powers of healing, thus enabling it, if wounded or torn, to patch itself up without any assistance. What, indeed, are the various forms of religion, but various manifestations of this healing power?

The testaceous animals stand next to chalk; it may be said of them that they are organised chalk. The insects which live on dying plants, and which, so to say, represent their colouring matter,—as, for instance, the varieties of lotus,—may, in the same way, be represented as the

organised plants. Considering the flower-dust which certain beetles convey to the flowers, Steffens called those beetles the *winged brains* of the flower. This is more than a clever combination, and the insect I mentioned may with the same right be described as organised dying matter. The term of living colouring matter conveys the same idea, but conceals it too.

Most precious are the simplest minerals; in the organic world that is most precious which is most complicated. This shows that the two realms are essentially different, and that there is no intercourse between the two.

The students of physical science are but too prone to take each phenomenon for granted, and at once to jump to a conclusion. Hence their knowledge is unsatisfactory and chiefly hypothetical.

There is such a thing as a refined empiricism, which while it identifies itself with its object, grows into real theory. This gradation of the powers of the mind belongs, however, to a very cultivated age.

Most disgusting are pedantic observers and crotchety theorists ; their experiments are petty and complicated, their hypotheses abstract and startling. Such minds luxuriate in terms and obstruct the progress of science, for it is absolutely necessary that sounder men should repeat their experiments and throw some light on the chaos they make. But since there are not many who can do this, affairs are allowed to take their own course, and the results at which such crotchety theorists arrive, are, to a certain extent, valued. And this is not, indeed, a very great crime.

When we consider the problems of Aristotle, we cannot but admire his gift of observation, and we are struck with astonishment at the minuteness of the Greek vision. Their fault is exaggeration ; they jump from the phenomenon to the explanation, and thus they come to unsatisfactory and theoretical statements. Our own time is by no means free from this fault.

Those only *know* who know little ; experience breeds doubt.

No single phenomenon explains itself ; a great

many of them, carefully and methodically arranged, lead to something like theory. And yet, in the natural sciences, we want the categorical imperative quite as much as in the moral world. But we ought to remember that the imperative is not the end but merely the beginning.

If traditional lore be alloyed with error, those observe worst, who know most. Sectarianism in science, destroys all fidelity and freedom of conception. A Vulcanist sees everything with the eyes of vulcanism. The Neptunist is in the same plight. The views of these theorists are vitiated; they cannot see the objects in their natural purity. When they tell us of what they have seen and observed, they do not, however veracious they may be, give us the truth of the objects. All their conclusions have a strong colouring of prejudice.

Far indeed am I from saying that pure and real knowledge is prejudicial to observation. On the contrary it is an old truth, that we have eyes and ears only for what we know. A professional musician hears every instrument and every tone in an orchestra, while the public are overwhelmed with the volume of sound. And

he who merely enjoys nature sees nothing but the broad expanse of a green and flowery meadow, while the botanist is struck with the infinite details of each separate little plant.

But there ought to be a limit to every thing, and as I have already said, in *Götz* that, from very learning, the son does not know his father, so there are scientific people, so overburdened with learning and hypotheses, that they neither see nor hear. Those people swallow everything ; they are so engrossed with the matter they revolve within their own minds, that they behave exactly like drunkards, lovers, or angry men, who pass their friends in the streets, without even seeing them.

The observer of nature ought to be pure and tranquil of mind ; he ought to be undisturbable and un-pre-occupied. A child takes notice of beetles and flowers ; all its senses are collected for a sole and simple interest ; it never thinks that some notable fact might be happening in the clouds, nor does it care to look at them.

To consider himself the end and aim of creation comes most naturally to man, who is prone to judge all things only with respect to himself,

and in as far as they can be serviceable and useful to him. He usurps dominion over the vegetable and the animal kingdom, and while devouring other creatures as the most fitting nourishment, he extols the goodness of his creator, who thus paternally provides for his wants. He takes milk from the cow, honey from the bee, wool from the sheep ; and since he makes use of the good things of this world, he believes that they were expressly created for the use he makes of them. Indeed, it is difficult for him to understand that even the smallest herb should be without its use, and although he may not, just now, know which of his purposes such or such a herb may serve, he devoutly hopes to discover the secret.

This general opinion is not the less manifested in special cases ; the general views of life are transplanted into sciences, and in considering the parts, kinds, and appurtenances of organic beings, we inquire what purpose they were intended to serve, and what is their use ?

This sort of thing may do for a time, and, to some extent, a man may get on with it in the sciences. But he must sooner or later meet with phenomena for which his petty theory has no space, and not having the guidance of a

higher principle, he is soon lost in contradictions.

Such utilitarians say 'an ox has horns that it may defend itself.' But, I ask, why do not sheep have horns? and if they have any, why are they turned about their ears, so as to be altogether useless?

But the case is far different, when I say 'an ox defends itself with its horns, because it has them.'

Questions as to the why and wherefore are by no means scientific. A little more progress is made by the question: *how?* for when I ask '*how* does an ox have horns?' I am led to consider its organization, and I learn at the same time, that the lion has not, and cannot have horns.

Thus, for instance, there are two unfilled, hollow places in the human skull. *Why* are they there? would be a hopeless question, but the question, *how* it happens that they are there? reveals these hollow spots as remains of the animal skull; they are much more considerable in lower organizations; and in spite of the exalted position of man, the traces remain even in his organization.

The utilitarians suspect you of an intention of robbing them of their God, if you object to

their adoring *Him* who gave horns to the ox wherewith to defend itself. But I humbly beg to be allowed to adore *Him*, whose creative wealth permitted him to create after many thousand plants, a plant in which all the rest are contained, and to produce, after many thousand species of animals, a being which contains them all—namely, man.

It is also customary to adore *Him* who gives the cattle its food, and meat and drink to man, according to his appetite. But I adore *Him* who gave to the world such astounding powers of production, that though but the millionth part of them be exerted, the world is so crowded with beings, that wars and pestilence, deluges and conflagrations, cannot prevail against them. Such is *my* God.

I cannot but laugh at those *æsthetikers* who are at pains to connect some abstract words into an idea into which they would force the *Inexpressible*, which is generally known by the word '*beautiful*.' The Beautiful is an elementary phenomenon, which is never incorporated, but whose reflex becomes visible in a thousand various revelations of creative genius, as various, indeed, as nature herself. I am not of opinion

that nature is beautiful in all her creations. Her intentions are always good, but the conditions of existence are not always either good or perfect.

For instance, the *oak* is a tree which *may* be very beautiful. But it requires a variety of favourable circumstances to enable nature to produce a really beautiful oak. If it grows in a dense forest, surrounded by large trees, it will soar aloft and struggle for free air and light. Its side branches will be few and wretched, and in the course of the century they will droop and perish. But when the top of the oak has reached the open air, its object has been obtained, its branches spread in every direction, and it commences forming a crown. But by this time the tree is past the meridian of life; its strength has been spent in its struggles for light and air, and its endeavours to form a crown are not likely to be successful. When it has ceased growing, it is tall, strong, with a slender trunk, but it wants the proportionate expanse of top which would entitle us to call it beautiful.

But if the oak grows in wet and moory land, or if the soil be too rich, it will at an early period send forth branches and twigs in every direction. But it wants antagonistic and retard-

ing influences; hence it wants the gnarled, obstinate character of its species, and seen from a distance, the tree looks mild, in the manner of a lime tree. It cannot be beautiful—at least, not as an oak.

And if the same tree grows on the stony declivity of a mountain, it is likely to be gnarled and cornery (*eckig*) to an enormous extent, but it wants free development, it is wretched and stunted in its growth, and it can never move us to admiration, awe, or astonishment.

A sandy soil, or one mixed with sand, in which its giant roots may freely be sent forth in every direction, appears most favourable to the oak. It wants also space, light and air, rain and wind. If protected against the storms and inclemencies of the changing seasons, it can never grow into anything respectable; but a century's contest with the elements renders it strong and mighty, and when it has reached its full growth we admire it, and are astonished and awed in its presence.

If from these hints you draw the conclusion, that a creature is beautiful when it has reached the height of its natural development—well and good. But it ought first to be settled what is meant by the 'height of natural develop-

ment.' If that period of growth be meant which perfectly expresses the peculiar character of this or that creature, I agree with you, especially if you add, that one of the conditions to a perfectly expressed character is, that the construction of the various members of it be proper and fit for its natural destination.

A horse is called beautiful from the appropriateness of its structure. There is in it not only elegance and ease of its movements, but something besides, which eminent horsemen and horse-keepers may possibly be able to define, and of which I have merely a general impression. And a painter, too, would admire many beauties in the strongly-marked character—the mighty bones, sinews, and muscles of a dray-horse. Probably he would prefer it to the milder and more equal character of the saddle-horse. Let the breed be pure; let it be free from the stunting hand of man; that is the great thing. A horse with its tail and mane cut off; a dog with cropped ears; a tree deprived of its most glorious branches, and clipped into the figure of a bird or a bull; and—worse than these—a virgin body deformed by stays; all these are odious to good taste. They belong to the æsthetic catechism of the 'Philisters.'

Two points must always be kept in sight in the history of art. First, that beginnings cannot be considered as too infantine and childish, and, secondly, that afterwards the demands for reality are ever antagonistic to sense and taste.

Oeser taught me that the ideal of beauty is simplicity and tranquillity. Hence no youth can be a master, and it is a piece of good fortune if this truth need not be inculcated by sad experience.

The spirit of the real is the true ideal.

Nothing is so atrocious as fancy without taste.

The subject is open to all ; those only understand the idea who are capable of adding to it, but the form is a secret to most men.

Art is based on a strong sentiment of religion —on a profound and mighty earnestness ; hence it is so prone to co-operate with religion. Religion is not in want of art ; it rests on its own majesty.

Art is a serious business ; most serious when

employed on grand and sacred objects. The artist stands higher than art, and higher than the object. He uses art for his purposes, and deals with the object after his own fashion.

The province of plastic art is the visible world, the outward appearance of natural objects. The 'natural,' when ethically pleasing, is called naïve. Naïve objects form the province of art, which should be an ethical expression of the natural. Objects which point in either direction are the most favourable.

The naïve is akin to the real. The real, without an ethical reflexion, is called vulgar.

Art in and by itself is noble. Hence the artist need not be afraid of the vulgar. His touch ennobles it. The greatest artists are the boldest in this royal prerogative.

In every artist are the germs of audacity. Without it talent is impossible, and this audacity shows itself especially when attempts are making to hamper a man of talent.

Sentimentality, however troublesome, ought

not to be despised. But when is it unbearable? I answer when the ideal is immediately connected with vulgarity. This is done by hollowness of manner, without substance and form. For both idea and object are annihilated by this species of sentimentality; the idea, because it is important, and because it must needs deal with important objects; and the object, because it may be good, solid, and useful, without, however, becoming important.

Art does not, indeed, represent conceptions, but its manner of representing is a conception—a concentration of what is general, and of what is characteristic, namely, *Style*.

The success of a work of art depends upon the degree in which the subject it undertakes to represent, is fraught with the idea.

I have never made a secret of my enmity to parodies and travesties. My only reason for hating them is because they lower the beautiful, noble and great, that they may annihilate it. Indeed, where there is no reality of such, I would still preserve the semblance. The ancients and Shakespeare, while they seem to deprive us of

things great and beautiful, create and establish in their place, something which is highly valuable, worthy, and satisfactory.

He who ceases to hold communion with the masters of his art, can never make progress, while he is in danger of going back. Wherever there is talent, there ought to be unceasing exertion and self-denial, but this no one cares to understand. Every one wishes to have art in his own way, but art has its own way too, in which alone it is to be wooed and won. I see many men of talent conducting themselves like wasps that fly against a pane of glass; they run their heads against very hard substances, simply because they are transparent.

It is the same with an artist's education as with the education of any other talent. Our strong points are in a manner formed by themselves, but those germs and dispositions of our nature which are not within our every day tendencies, and are consequently less powerful, demand particular attention and fostering care, that they too may become strong and flourishing.

No pleasure can be greater than the one resulting from the admiration of real works of art,

provided it springs from actual knowledge, and not from prejudice.

The smallest production of nature encloses the sphere of its perfection within it. I may discover its proportions and ascertain that the totality of a real existence is completed within a narrow sphere. A work of art has its perfection without : its best part is in the artist's idea, to which he scarcely ever works up ; the remainder is to be found in certain traditional laws, which, though traceable to the character of the art or the trade, are by no means so easy to understand as the laws of living nature. In works of art there is a deal of tradition ; nature's works are always like God's own word, fresh from his mouth.

It was a great merit in old Kant, that he placed nature and art side by side, granting to either the right to act without purpose on great principles. Spinoza had confirmed me in my dislike to those absurd final causes. Nature and art are too great to aim at purposes ; indeed they can afford to do without them, for reflective connexions are everywhere, and reflective connexions are life.

Since all the arts must be raised up by action and thought, by theory and practice, they appear to me somewhat like cities, of which no one can tell what soil they were built on. Rocks were broken and removed, and the very stones thus obtained were cut into convenient shapes and used for the construction of houses. Cavities were considered *very* convenient; they were turned into cellars. Wherever a solid soil was wanting, an artificial soil of masonry was substituted, and in many instances a swamp was discovered at the foot of the rock, so that poles had to be rammed in, and the building erected thereon. And afterwards, when all was complete and habitable, who could tell which was which?—which was nature and which art?—which foundation and which superstructure?—which material and which form? And how difficult is it to prove that at the earliest periods they might have managed those things more agreeably to nature, to art, and to the purpose they were destined to serve.

Light is truth, but the sun is not truth, though he sheds light. Night is untruth. And what is beauty? It is neither light nor night; it is twilight—the medium between truth and untruth.

Beauty is inexplicable : it appears to us as a dream, when we contemplate the works of great artists ; it is a hovering, floating, and glittering shadow, whose outline eludes the grasp of definition. Mendelssohn and others tried to catch Beauty as a butterfly, and pin it down for inspection. They have succeeded in the same way as they are likely to succeed with a butterfly. The poor animal trembles and struggles, and its brightest colours are gone ; or if you catch it without spoiling the colours, you have at best a stiff and awkward corpse. But a corpse is not an *entire* animal, it wants that which is essential in all things, namely, life—spirit, which sheds beauty on everything.

Religion stands in the same relation to art, as any other of the higher interests of life. It is a subject, and its rights are those of all other subjects. Belief and disbelief are, moreover, not exactly the organs for the appreciation of a work of art, which requires a different sort of human powers and faculties. Art ought to work for those organs by which we conceive it ; otherwise it misses its aim, and takes no effect. But a religious subject may be a very good subject for art, provided it be generally human.

Piety is a necessary and amiable quality, but I wish they would keep it apart from art, where, exactly on account of its simplicity and dignity, it suppresses all energy, while the highest mind alone is at liberty to combine with, and perhaps even to overcome it.

To have promoted the artistic cultivation of a distinguished natural talent is matter for honest pride. In our time the merit is greater than formerly, when beginners had faith in schools, rules, and masters, and when they modestly put up with the grammar of their art, which is not the case with the young men of our time.

The artists of Germany have for the last thirty years believed that every talent is its own teacher; and in this belief they are confirmed by a legion of enthusiastic amateurs, who are likewise without a foundation. Many a time I am told that such and such an artist owes all to himself. Sometimes I put up with it, but sometimes, too, I tell them that he has, after all, very little reason to be proud of his master.

For, after all, what is a man in himself, and by his own means? The moment he opens his eyes and his ears he becomes a prey to impres-

sions, to example and tradition. With these he forms himself according to his individual tastes and comforts, and to a certain point he may get on. But this division and distraction avails him nothing with the principal points which must be mastered; and he becomes a prey to uneasiness, essentially the misery of a practical man. Fortunate is he who at an early age knows what *art* is!

If you would create something, you must *be* something. Dante is a great man, but he had a civilization of centuries to support him; the Rothschilds are rich, but it took more than the life of one man to obtain all their treasures. There is a greater depth in all this than is generally believed. It is a sealed book to our imitators of old German art; they turn their personal weakness and artistic incapacity to the imitation of nature, and fancy that they have done something.* They have a *locus standi*, but it is *beneath* nature. But he who would produce a great work, ought to stand so high as to be able, like the Greeks before him, to raise

* It would appear that Goethe too had to contend with German Pre-Raphaelites.—ED.

reality to the level of his mind, and to give existence to the secret intentions of nature, which she could not carry out, either from internal weakness or on account of outward obstacles.

The human figure has been so thoroughly used up by the ancients, that we cannot produce a new position without overstepping the limits of good taste. The essential point is, that we express our *ideas*, and that we are able to reproduce them for our own purposes.

I am of opinion that high art ought to show us *human* forms in all imaginable power and beauty. Of ethical subjects, those only ought to be chosen which are identified with the human form, and which can be expressed in the attitude and the features.

The composition of a picture is not, I think, subject to rules. That is the best composition which, observing the most delicate laws of Harmony,* so arranges the objects that they by their position tell their own story. For examples, at once the most simple and beautiful, see

* The original word used is "Eurythmy," which Goethe adapted from the Greek, *εὐρυθμία*.—ED.

Raphael's 'Bible,' and Dominichino's 'Exorcism in Grotta Ferata.'

A man ought to have a trade by which to live. An artist is not paid, but an artizan is. Chodowiecki, the artist* whom we admire, cannot make a living. But he is an artizan too; he engraves illustrations for the most worthless books, and he is well paid.

You cannot judge unless you know the tricks of the trade; you cannot master the master, and the journeyman, too, can only be mastered by his master.

A landscape painter ought to know a variety of things, not only perspective, architecture, and the anatomy of the human and of the animal body; he ought also to know something of botany and mineralogy, if he would properly express the characters of trees and plants, and of the various mountain ranges. He need not,

* Chodowiecki, printer and engraver, born at Dantzic, 1726, died at Berlin, 1801. He sketched illustrations for Ariosto's *Rolando*, for Gessner's *Idyls*, for *Don Quixote*, for Klopstock's *Messiah*, and for some of Lessing's plays. He was generally called the Hogarth of Germany.—Ed.

however, be a professional mineralogist, since his business lies chiefly with formations of chalk, clay, and sandstone, of which he ought to know the strata in which they lie, the manner in which they split with decay, what trees they sustain, and how they affect them.

In nature no object is isolated; each one is connected with something else before it, at its side, behind it, above or below it. An object may strike us as isolated and picturesque, but it is not the object alone which makes this impression, but the connexion in which we see it with the objects at its side, behind it, or above it, all of which help in making that impression.

Thus, for instance, I take a walk and see an oak which appears extremely picturesque. If I take a sketch of that oak, and of that oak, only, I shall not any longer see it such as it was, because it wants the objects which combined with it in producing a certain impression. In the same way, a piece of forest scenery may be beautiful under such and such a sky, or in such and such a light or position of the sun; but if I omit these in my sketch, it appears shallow, indifferent, and inanimate.

Besides, nothing is *beautiful* in nature but

what is true according to the laws of nature. To transfer the truth of nature into your picture, you must not give a result without its natural causes.

I find in a rivulet stones of a pleasing shape ; the parts which are exposed to the air are picturesquely covered with green moss. But the formation of this moss has been caused not only by the humidity of the water, but also by the shade of a beetling rock, or by shady trees and shrubs, which favoured the growth of moss in that locality. If, in a picture, I omit these causes, my picture will want truth and real convincing energy.

The position of a tree, the nature of the soil in which it grows, and the trees which surround it, all these exert a powerful influence on its formation. An oak growing on the windy westerly summit of a hill is very differently formed from an oak springing from the soft soil of a sheltered valley. Either may be beautiful, but they will certainly be different, and in an invented landscape either ought to be put into the exact position in which it would be in nature. The scenery around is, therefore, of great importance to the artist.

This applies by no means to accidental objects

or circumstances, which can have no influence on the shape and formation of the principal object, or on the picturesque impression it makes at the time.

Those parts on which the painter throws the strongest light admit of no detailed execution ; water, rocks, the naked soil, or buildings, are the most favourable objects for the strongest light to rest on. Objects which require more detail are objectionable.

Cephalus, the hunter, after becoming aware of the mischief which he unconsciously had done in dawn of morning, fills the rocks and forests with his wailings. Here, on this impression, which cannot be too highly valued, he sits brooding over his fate with the body of his wife on his knees.

His wailings meanwhile awoke all the denizens of the mountains. An old Faun was the first to come forward ; he represents the mourner by the sadness of his features and the violence of his gestures. Two women, of more moderate sympathies, one of whom seizes the hand of the corpse, as though she would ascertain if life has really departed, stand by and express their feel-

ings more delicately. A Dryad moving in the branches of a tree, looks down with sadness. At the feet of Cephalus there is his unavoidable dog, stretched out, and panting and looking around for another prey. Cupid, with his left joined to the principal group, displays in his right hand the fatal arrow.

And to whom does he show it? A throng of women and children roused by the wailing, rush forward to see what has happened. They see it, express their horror and sympathy with the sufferings of the principal personage. That others follow and will crowd the scene, is shown by the last girl in the procession, torn upwards by her mother's hand, while she looks back for those who probably come after her. On the rock above them sits the Nymph of a fountain sadly leaning on the flowing urn; higher still we see an Oreas looking out alarmed and astonished; she heard the wailing, and she has not waited to braid her hair; there she comes, holding her long tresses in her hand, curious and sympathizing. On the rocks opposite, a Faun ascends calmly and deliberately, breaking his fast from the branches of the trees. But to make quite sure that all this happened before daybreak, we see Helios ascending from the sea.

The direction of his looks and his gestures shows that he too knows of the sad event, and laments it.

If one would understand and comment on problematical pictures such as this one by Titian, the following points ought to be taken into consideration. Since the 13th century, when painters swerved off from the still respectable, but, in many later instances, mummy-like, withered-up Byzantine style, and when they turned to nature, nothing was too high and nothing too low but they sought to incorporate it into reality. Indeed, so unreasonable were the demands, that the pictures became like a table of patterns, and they were required to contain all and everything that the eye could reach. Such a picture was to be filled up with figures and details, and it was but natural that figures and other objects, utterly foreign to the subject of the picture, were introduced as proofs of a general proficiency in art. In Titian's days the painters were glad to submit to such demands.

Let us now turn to the picture itself. In an open and diversified landscape we see on the left hand next to a rock and a tree, a most beautiful girl reclining, comfortably, calmly,

indifferently, as though safe in her solitary bower and stretched on the cushions of her couch. If that girl were cut out of the picture, that single figure would be a picture in itself, and one which would satisfy every one. But in this masterly picture one of the chief objects was to show the beauty of the human body. Behind her is a high vase with a narrow neck—perhaps for the sake of the metal; a slight stream of smoke flows upwards from the neck of the vase. Is this an allusion to the piety of the beautiful woman, to her silent prayer, or to something of the kind?

For we soon become aware that this woman is not of the common order. Near her is a skull, and at its side a cave, from which protrudes a human arm, still covered with flesh and muscles.

The meaning of all this is soon apparent. Between the said exuviæ and the divine woman's form, wriggles a small, agile dragon, greedily gazing at the delicate prey. And if, though thus tranquilly reclining and defying the dragon as by a charm, we should nevertheless have some fear for her safety, we are comforted by the appearance from the blackest of clouds of a knight in armour, mounted on a very strange lion which vomits fire, and it is quite plain that the dragon can have no chance between the two.

Thus we behold, though in an extraordinary manner, St. George threatening the dragon, and the lady for whose sake he undertakes the adventure.

As for the landscape, it has nothing whatever to do with the event ; it is, according to the principle we stated above, as remarkable as possible. Still the figures we described have their appropriate places in it.

Between two rocky banks, one steep and thickly wooded, the other more shallow and less covered with vegetation, a river flows to meet us, rushing impetuously forward at a distance, but running with gentle waves as it approaches us. The steep bank on the right is crowned with a mighty ruin ; powerful, unseemly masses of broken masonry betoken the might and energy of those who raised those walls. A column here and there, or a statue in a niche, speak of the splendour of a king's palace.

The opposite bank introduces us to more modern times ; massive towers are there newly built, walls and loopholes all in excellent order. Far behind in the back ground, the two banks are bridged over, and the bridge reminds us of the Angel's-bridge, and the tower behind it is like the tower of the Castel del Angelo. The desire for truth and reality made such a confusion of

places and times by no means objectionable. But the whole is altogether harmonious and consistent ; if you were to alter the smallest line, you would damage the composition.

Very remarkable too is that truly poetic thundercloud which sweeps the knight onwards. It would seem to unfold itself from that ruin, like a dragon's tail, but, with all our zoomorphism, we cannot force it into anything like a definable shape. On the other hand, there is, between the bridge and the battlements, a conflagration, whose smoke ascending to the fire-vomiting mouth of the lion, merges in the smoke which proceeds from that wonderful animal. Enough ! though we, in the first instance, considered this composition to be collective, we are now compelled to own that it is in unity throughout, and as such we consider and praise it.

It frightens me to see the animals painted by Roos. The narrowness, obscurity, dreaminess, yawningness of their condition, affects me with powerful sympathy. It makes me afraid of becoming an animal, and it makes me believe that the artist himself was an animal. Be that as it may, it is astonishing how he managed to

feel and think with those creatures, and to show their true character through their outward form. This shows what a great talent may come to, so it but confines itself to objects which are analogous to its nature.

Dogs, cats, beasts of prey, or the delineation of human character—these were beyond the sphere of Roos. But the tame herbivorous animals, sheep, goats, and cows, and such like, were the objects which took his fancy, which he repeated *ad infinitum*. Here was the true sphere of his talent, and he never, in any single execution, went beyond that sphere. He was right. He had an innate sympathy for those animals; their minds were open to him, and knowing their minds as he did, he knew their bodies also. He could not, perhaps, look through other creatures as he looked through them, and hence he wanted the talent and the *call* to reproduce other creatures.

Manner is always ready and impatient of labour. A real and great talent delights in execution. Roos is indefatigable in painting the hair and wool of his goats and sheep; the infinite detail shows that he was happy while at work, and that he never thought of leaving off and having done with them.

Smaller talents are not satisfied with art as such ; while engaged on a work, they think of nothing but the advantages which it is likely to procure for them. Such worldly objects and leanings are at war with everything that is great.

Every one laughs at an absurdity, and is happy to see anything so far beneath himself. Mediocrity gives a feeling of comfortable superiority. Pretence has unqualified and unconditional praise, for, to the empiric, pretence is all in all, and has its value everywhere. That which is good, but not perfect, is passed over without a word, for the genuine qualities of good things enforce respect, their imperfections provoke doubts, and doubts, as perhaps they ought to do, make people afraid of committing themselves. Perfect productions, whenever they can be found, give perfect satisfaction, while pretence gives a shallow superficial satisfaction ; and thus the two are similar in their results.

The Germans are a strange set of people ! They are always hunting after profound thoughts and ideas, or assuming them where they are not, and, by so doing, they make life much

more difficult than it originally is. Do, I pray, for once give yourself up to your impressions; be amused, moved, improved, taught, and emboldened to some great idea or action. But do not, by any means, fancy that all is vanity unless it has some abstract thought or idea beneath its surface.

They ask me what idea I wished to incorporate in my 'Faust'? Can I know it, or if I know, can I put it into words? From the heavens, through the world, into hell! There is something; but it is not an idea, it is only a programme of the progress of the dramatic action. And again, that the devil loses his wager, that there is salvation for a sinner who constantly struggles for better things—that is an effective thought, and a good thought, and a thought which explains a great deal; but it is not an idea on which the whole piece, or any particular part of it, is founded. Fine things indeed we should have come to, if so varied, so eventful, so chequered a life, as the one I represented in *Faust*, had been tied down to the slender thread of a single idea.

As a poet, I was never anxious to embody an abstract idea. Impressions came to my mind; impressions of nature, of life,—lovely,

many-coloured, varied impressions; they were begot by a lively fancy, and all I had to do as a poet was the artistic shaping and fashioning of such impressions, and their production in such a form that my readers received the same impressions from the pages of my books.

Whenever I sought to embody an idea, I did it in little poems, in which there could be unity throughout; such as, for instance, in 'the Metamorphosis of the Animals' and of 'the Plant,' in the poem *Vermächtniss*, and in others. The only one of my larger productions in which I am sensible of having worked out a leading idea, is the *Wahlverwandschaften*. Hence that novel is intelligible to reason, but I will not say it is any the better for that. On the contrary, I am of opinion that a poetic production is all the better for being incommensurable and unintelligible to reason.

The Grecian idea of *Fate* is antiquated and unsuited to our mode of thinking; it is opposed to our religious opinions. Its assumption in modern times looks like affectation. It is an old-fashioned dress like the Roman toga, and unsuited to the cast of our countenances.

We moderns had better say with Napoleon—

‘Politics are Fate.’ But we ought not, as some do, declare that politics are poesy, or that they are a fitting subject for poesy. Thomson wrote a very good poem on the Seasons, and a very bad one on Liberty; not because there was a want of poesy in the poet—the subject was unpoetical.

Whenever a poet turns to politics, he becomes a party-man, and is ruined as a poet; he resigns his liberty and independence of thought, and assumes the colours of narrow-mindedness and prejudice.

As man and citizen, the poet is a patriot, but the fatherland of his poetical power and action is to be found in what is good, noble, and beautiful. These are not confined to a particular province or country; he seizes and fashions them wherever he finds them. Like the eagle, he wings his flight *above* the countries, and swoops down upon his quarry, no matter whether it run in Prussia or in Saxony.

And after all, what is meant by the words ‘to love one’s country,’ or ‘to act patriotically’? A poet who wars against prejudice and narrow-mindedness, who enlightens his nation, elevates its taste and its thoughts—what more can he

do? what greater benefits can he confer upon his country?

These improper and ungrateful demands upon a poet are exactly on a par with the demand (if it were made) that a colonel, in order to be a good patriot, should meddle with political innovations, and by so doing neglect his legitimate vocation. A colonel has his country in his regiment; he is a capital patriot, if, unmindful of politics, he gives his attention and care to the battalions under his command.

I hate all bungling as I do sin, but particularly bungling in politics, which leads to the misery and ruin of many thousands and millions of people.

Our German professors of æsthetics say a great deal about poetical and unpoetical subjects, and, to a certain extent, they are not, perhaps, altogether wrong. But no *real* subject can ever be unpoetical in the hands of a poet who knows how to treat it.

The world is so large and life so varied, that there can never be a dearth of occasions for poems. All poems ought to be occasional pieces—that is to say, real life ought to furnish the

occasion and the material. A speciality becomes general and poetical in the hands of the poet. All my poems are occasional pieces; they are prompted by and rooted in real life.

Let no one say that reality lacks poetical interest, for a poet, if he be a real poet, ought to invest commonplace subjects with interest. Reality furnishes the matter, the points, the substance, and it is the poet's business to form them into a beautiful and lifelike creation.

Our modern poets dilute their ink.

Originality! what do they mean by it? The action of the world upon us commences with the hour of our birth, and ends only with our death. It is here and there and everywhere. There is nothing we can claim as our own, but energy, strength, and volition. Very little of me would be left, if I could but say what I owe to my great predecessors and contemporaries.

Nor is the time of life in which we are influenced by a distinguished individuality a matter of indifference.

It was of great importance to me that Lessing, Winkelman, and Kant were my seniors, and that

the two former influenced my youth, and the latter my riper years.

Schiller's youth and youthful energy, when the world had tired me out, and the circumstance that the brothers Humboldt and Schlegel commenced their career under my very eyes,—all this was of the greatest importance and inexpressibly advantageous to me.

All those tomfooleries about pre- and post-occupation, about plagiarisms and semi-plagiarisms, appear to me supremely ridiculous. For the thoughts which the time suggests and demands may simultaneously spring up in a hundred heads, and there is no saying who was first and who was last.*

But let us stop here, for the disputes about priority are like the disputes about legitimacy. He who stands his ground is prior, and ever legitimate (1816).

The conception and reproduction of the speciality is the true life of art. Everyone can compete with us in generalities, but the speciality

* It is strange that Goethe should not have thought of this when he pretended that Byron's *Manfred* was borrowed from his *Faust*.—ED.

is above competition, because the best are strangers to it.

Nor is there any reason to fear that the speciality will want sympathies. Every character, however peculiar it may be, everything representable, from the stone up to man, has its generality, for everything is a repetition, and there is nothing in the world which has a single existence.

On this degree of individual production commences what we call a 'composition.'

A poet's task would be easy, if all were equally clever and well educated. With such a public the poet might be true throughout, nor need he be afraid to give utterance to his best thoughts. But as things are, there is a level above which he must not rise. He ought to consider that his handiwork will be submitted to a mixed public, and he ought to take care lest many good and honest men take offence at his candour. Time, too, is a tyrant, and has its whimsicalities, countenancing a thing in one century, and discountenancing the same thing in another. The Greeks might say what we may not say; and the phrases which delighted Shakspeare's contemporaries are too strong for

the present generation of Englishmen, even so, that a 'Family Shakspeare' has become a necessity of the age.

One who learns singing has no trouble with the notes which are adapted to his throat; they are most natural and easy to him. But the other notes, which are not in his throat, are at first very difficult. If he would be a singer, he must conquer those difficulties, for *all* the notes ought to be at his command. It is the same with the poet. You cannot call him a real poet so long as he gives expression only to his own subjective sentiments. But to be able to appropriate and give expression to the world, that is it which makes him a poet. This, too, makes him inexhaustible, and always fresh and new, while a subjective character has soon done speaking its little mind, and then it perishes in mannerism.

They are continually talking of the study of the ancients, but what can they mean by it, except that we ought to consider and give expression to the real world, for that is what the ancients did when they were alive.

It is a peculiarity of the literary world, that

nothing in it is ever destroyed without a new production, and one of the same kind too. There is in it an eternal life, for it is always in its old age, in its manhood, youth, and childhood, and all this at one and the same time.

It has struck me as curious, that we moderns are so strongly inclined to confound the 'Genres' (of artistic production), and that we are scarcely able to distinguish between them. The artists, who ought to confine their works within certain characteristic limits, appeal to the desire which readers and spectators have of realizing the exact truth of everything. Meyer remarks, that there has been a tendency of amalgamating every species of plastic art, with the art of painting, in which outline and colour combine to make the imitation as true as possible to the original. In the progress of poesy too, it is apparent, that everything is tending to the drama. Novels in letters are altogether dramatic, and allow of the introduction of dialogues. This, indeed, has been done by Richardson. But the introduction of dialogues into the usual kind of novel, is censurable.*

* Almost all the bad novelists of Goethe's time were guilty of this fault.—ED.

How often do not people, after reading a good novel, express their wish to see the plot and the incidents on the stage, and a number of bad dramas have been produced in consequence. Interesting scenes too are immediately to be sketched and engraved, and nothing is to be left to the imagination. All is to be realized, perfectly present, dramatic, and the dramatic itself is to stand on a level with the real and the true. An artist ought to oppose these childish, barbarous, and absurd tendencies. He ought to limit every work of art to its own sphere, and preserve for each its qualities and peculiarities. The ancients did this, and by so doing, they came to be the great artists they were. But who can swim as against the wind and stream? And if any one were to attempt to swim so, he would make very little progress.

The dramatic law of the unities, has for its object to make the action comprehensible and probable. The unities are only good when they attain that object. Even the Greeks, who laid down the law, have not at all times obeyed it; in the *Phaëthon* of Euripides, in some other pieces, there is a change of scene, which shows that the perfect representation of their subject was of greater importance to them than a law

to which they never, at any time, attached much importance. Shakspeare's pieces go as far as possible beyond the unity of time and place, but they are comprehensible. Indeed, nothing can be more comprehensible than they are, and hence the Greeks would think them unobjectionable. The French poets have most strictly adhered to the law of the three unities, but they sin against the comprehensible, for they seek to solve a dramatic law not dramatically but by recitation.

The effect of good music is not caused by its novelty. On the contrary, it strikes us more, the more familiar we are with it.

The dignity of art is most eminent in music, since it has no matter either to impair or adulterate its effect. Music is all form and idea; it ennobles and elevates all it expresses.

Music is either sacred or profane. The sacred character is most suitable to its dignity; its influence is most powerful and unaffected by the fashions of the age. Profane music ought to be spirited and exhilarating.

Mixed music, a fusion of the profane and

sacred character, is atrocious; and maudlin music, delighting in weak and wretched sentiment, is absurd. It wants the seriousness of sacred music, as well as the merry movement and the exhilarating melody of profane music.

It is with the works of man as with the works of nature. The *intentions*, in particular, are worthy of attention.

Certain books are written, not to instruct you, but to let you know that the author knew something.

Nobody cares to look at a rainbow after the first quarter of an hour.

Nothing is more terrible than active ignorance.

The greatest difficulties are found where we expect them least.

All clever thoughts have been thought before. You must try to think them again.

The sentimentality of the English is humorous and tender; that of the French is popular

and lacrimose, and maudlin; German sentimentality is naive and realistic.

Literature is the fragment of fragments; but little of the events and conversations has been written down, and very little of what was so written has come down to us.

Literature is fragmentary, and yet it deals in endless repetitions, showing how cabined, cribbed, and confined the human mind really is.

A romance is a subjective epopœe, in which the author asks permission to treat the world in his own manner. The great question is whether he has a manner of his own. All the rest follows.

The decline of literature indicates the decline of the nation. The two keep pace in their downward tendency.

Our most valuable acquisition from history is the enthusiasm it excites.

Water is not indicative of frogs; but frogs are indicative of water.

Writing a history is one mode of settling with the past.

The historian has a twofold duty. His first duty he owes to himself, the second to his readers. He ought to ask what may and what may not have happened, and for the reader's sake he must determine what has happened. His dealings with himself are a matter for his colleagues, but the public ought not to be taken into the secret. They ought not to know how little authentic information there is in history.*

None can judge of history but those who have lived in a historical period. This applies to nations, as well as to individuals. The Germans learnt to judge of literature, the moment that they had a literature of their own.

Superstition is part of our being. Try to expel it, and you will find that it makes its escape into the strangest holes and corners of the

* Goethe, in the spirit of his age and nation, considered literature and science as a craft and a mystery, which the favoured few were called on to exercise for their own benefit, while the common herd, the public, were not to know one iota more than it pleased the initiated to reveal. This frame of mind is altogether incomprehensible to English writers, who feel that they are part of the public.—ED.

mind. Give it a few moments' respite, and it will come out again.

Superstition is the poesy of practical life ; hence a poet is none the worse for being superstitious.

Shakspeare's dramas want ease now and then ; they are more than they ought to be. This shows the great poet.

Lord Byron's talent has all the truth and grandeur of nature, but also its savageness and discomfort. He stands alone ; nobody comes near him, and nobody is like him.

Shakspeare is dangerous to young poets ; they cannot but reproduce him, while they fancy that they produce themselves.

How can I come to know myself ? Not by contemplation ; by action only. Do your duty, and you will know your value.

What is my duty ? The demands of the day.

Noscitur e sociis, but not less : tell me your

occupations and I will tell you what they will lead to.

Absolute activity leads to bankruptcy in strength.

The botanists have a class which they call 'Incompletæ.' The same may be said of mankind, that some of them are incomplete, namely, those whose aims and ends are not in keeping with their actions and achievements.

Many persons *will* make striking remarks, though they are by no means productive. Hence they say the strangest things.

I will listen to any one's convictions, but pray keep your doubts to yourself. I have plenty of my own.

If a man professes to do all he is required to do, he takes himself for more than he really is.

A man who is ignorant of foreign languages is also ignorant of his own language.

The painting and puncturing the body is a return to Animalism.

Whatever you cannot understand, you cannot possess.

The confidant of my vices is my master, though he were my valet.

I can promise to be candid, but I cannot promise to be impartial.

Ingratitude is a sign of weakness. I never knew a strong character ungrateful.

Great passions are incurable diseases. The very remedies make them worse.

Mysticism may be described as the scholastics of the heart, the dialectics of sentiment.

Madame Roland on the scaffold, asked for writing materials to note down the strange thoughts which were passing through her mind in her last moments. It is a pity the request was refused, for at the end of life, a tranquil mind conceives thoughts which before were inconceivable.

Time itself is an element.

Mysteries are not necessarily miracles.

Science has at all times been supported by individuals and scorned by the age. The age of Socrates poisoned him, and the age of Huss burned him ; the various ages are all alike.

There is a charm in rhythm ; it makes us believe that its grandeur is part of our own being.

Our adversaries think they refute us when they reiterate their own opinions without paying attention to ours.

In every character there is something, which, if publicly pronounced, would be thought objectionable.

A hero has no conscience. The most conscientious person is a quiet looker on.

Let no one fancy he is the coming man.

Nobody, they say, is a hero to his valet. Of course ; for a man must be a hero to understand a hero. The valet, I dare say, has great respect for some person of his own stamp.

The world cannot do without great men, but great men are very troublesome to the world.

Raphael is the purest among modern artists. He is thoroughly naïf; the real with him is not in conflict with the ethical or the sacred.

Hatred is active, and envy passive, disgust; there is but one step from envy to hate.

Philosophical speculation is dangerous to the Germans, for it makes their style unreal, incomprehensible, diffuse, and twaddling. The more they meddle with certain philosophical schools, the worse do they write. The practical among the Germans, the men of business and every-day life, write better than all the others. Schiller's style, for instance, is most splendid and impressive whenever he eschews philosophical discussion, as is shown by his very important letters.

Almost all the English write well; they are born orators and practical men, with a turn for the real.

The French character is apparent in the style of the French. They are a social people, and as such, they never forget the public which they

address. They aim at clearness, because they would convince; and at elegance, because they would please.

Generally speaking, an author's style is a faithful copy of his mind. If you would write a lucid style, let there first be light in your own mind; and if you would write a grand style, you ought to have a grand character.

The rapid growth of a talent, its genial development, is conditional on a store of spirit and sound civilization in the nation to which it belongs.

Beranger's parents were poor. His father was a needy tailor. Beranger himself commenced life in a small and sorry way as a printer's devil. Afterwards, he had some ill-paid clerkship in an office. He was never at school, and he never studied at a university. But his songs are, nevertheless, so full of mature cultivation, of grace, wit, and subtlest irony, they are so artistically finished, and their language is so masterly, that he is admired, not only by France, but by the whole of civilized Europe.

Now, fancy this same Beranger away from

Paris, and the influence and opportunities of a world-city, born as the son of a poor tailor, at Jena or Weimar; let him run his wretched career in either of the two small cities, and see what fruit would have grown on that very same tree, on such a soil and in such an atmosphere.

We admire the old Grecian tragedies. Instead of admiring the authors, we ought to admire the time and the nation in which such pieces could be produced. For, although there is some difference between these pieces, and although some of these poets may appear greater and more perfect than others, still, take them all in all, they have the same consequent character. It is the character of grandeur, reality, soundness, of human perfection, of practical wisdom, lofty thought, energetic conception, and of many other eminent qualities.

We find all these qualities, not only in their extant dramatic, but also in their lyrical works and their epics; we find them in the philosophers, rhetoricians, and historians; and we find them in an equal degree in their works of plastic art, that have come down to us. This is enough to convince us that such qualities were not monopolized by a few individuals, but that they

belonged to and were current in the nation and the time. Look at Burns! What makes him great, but the circumstance that the old songs of his ancestors still lived in the mouth of the people, that they were sung at his cradle, that he heard them and grew up with them in his boyhood, until their high perfection became part and parcel of himself, and until they became for him a living basis on which he could stand and take his start. And again, what makes him great, but the echo which his songs found in the hearts of his countrymen! They came back to him from the field where the labourers sang them, and from the inn, where merry fellows greeted his ear with his own songs.

Now look at the wretched contrast in Germany. We have old songs and quite as good ones, but which of them was in the people's mouth when *I* was young? Herder and his followers had to collect them, and to snatch them from oblivion, and it was a great thing to have them printed and put up in the libraries. And at a later period, what splendid songs were written by Bürger and Voss! Who can say that they are less important, and less congenial to popular feeling, than the songs of the excellent

Burns.* But which of them lives among the people? They were written and printed, and have been put up in the libraries, according to the usual fate of German poetry. And as for my own songs—which of them has life among the people? Some pretty girl or other will now and then sing a few of them to her piano; but among the *people* they are not known. With what powerful feelings do I think of the days in which Italian fishermen sang to me the verses of Tasso!

We Germans are a nation of yesterday. We have, indeed, for about a hundred years past, been intent upon cultivating; but a few centuries are likely to pass before our countrymen will have so various and so extensive a cultivation, that, like the Greeks, they adore beauty, and feel enthusiasm for a pretty song, and that it can be said of them, it is a long time since they were barbarians.

* Goethe was evidently ignorant of the fact that almost all Bürger's Ballads, at least, almost all his good ones, were translated from old English and Scotch ballads, and printed and published as original pieces. This foreign poetry, however excellent, could not, within a few years, become universally popular.—ED.

We, the inhabitants of the midland countries, are delighted with the *Odyssey*, but it is only its moral part which affects us. Its descriptive part has but a weak and unsatisfactory assistance from our imagination. But how splendid did that poem appear to me, when I read some of its cantos at Naples and in Sicily. It was the varnishing of an old picture; all the figures and colours came out in a broad, but yet harmonious glare of light. I confess to my mind the work was no longer a poem; it seemed nature itself. And this, indeed, was necessary with the ancients, since their works were recited in the presence of nature. How many of our poems could bear a recital in the market-place, or otherwise, in the open air?

There are four epochs of the chorus in the Greek tragedy.

In the first epoch appear a few persons magnifying gods and heroes, and reminding the hearers of genealogies, great achievements, and terrible fatalities. They call the Past into the Present. An approximating instance of this may be found in the *Seven before Thebes*, by Æschylus. This, then, is the commencement of dramatic art—the old style.

The second epoch shows us the mass of the chorus as mystic and principal persons of the piece, as, for instance, in the *Eumenides* and the *Suitors*. This, I am inclined to think, is high style. The chorus is independent; the interest is centred in it. This is the republican phase of dramatic art, for the tyrants and gods are mere accessories.

In the third epoch the chorus becomes an accessory (*begleitend*); the interest is transferred to the families, to their members and heads, whose fortunes are but loosely connected with the fate of the people which surrounds them. The chorus is subordinate; the tyrants and heroes stand forth in all the symmetry of their splendour. This is the beautiful style, and the pieces of Sophocles belong to this class. And since the crowd has only to act the part of looker-on, while the action lies between the hero and Fate, it has recourse to reflection, and takes the part of a called-for and welcome spectator.

In the fourth epoch the action is still more forcibly contracted within the sphere of private interests; the chorus is frequently nothing more than an antiquated custom, a heirloom of dramatic lumber. The chorus then is useless, ob-

trusive, and apt to disturb the dramatic action; for instance, when it is asked to keep a secret in which it can have no interest. Some examples of this are to be found in the tragedies of Euripides, for instance, in the *Helena* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*.

Of the manner in which the Greek tragedy sprung from lyrical poetry, we have, in our own days, a remarkable example in the emancipation of the drama from History, or rather, from the Epic. We find this example in the manner in which the Passion of Christ is recited in the Roman-catholic churches. It is a play, and acted by three persons, representing the Evangelist, Christ, and the other interlocutors. There is, moreover, a chorus (*Turba*). I quote a few sentences, to illustrate the meaning of my remarks:—

EVANGELIST. Dixit itaque ei Pilatus.

INTERLOCUTOR. Ergo rex es tu?

EVANGELIST. Respondit Jesus.

CHRISTUS. Tu dicis quia rex sum ego. Ego in hoc natus sum et ad hoc veni in mundum, ut testimonium perhibeam veritati; omnis qui est ex veritate audit vocem meam.

EVANGELIST. Dicit ei Pilatus.

INTERLOCUTOR. Quid est veritas?

EVANGELIST. Et cum hoc dixisset, iterum exivit ad Judæos, et dicit eis.

INTERLOCUTOR. Ego nullam invenio in eo causam. Est

autem consuetudo vobis, ut unum dimittam vobis in Pascha ; vultis ergo, dimittam vobis regem Judæorum ?

EVANGELIST. Clamaverunt ergo rursus omnes, dicentes.

TURBA. Non hunc sed Barrabam.

EVANGELIST. Erat autem Barrabas latro.

Now, if the part of the Evangelist is confined to the introduction in the manner of a prologue, and if his other words are dispensed with by the coming and going, the movements and actions of the other persons, it will be found that there is a tolerably good beginning to a drama.

The moral in *Antigone* has not been invented by Sophocles ; it was in the subject, but Sophocles was, perhaps, the more inclined to choose that subject, because it had dramatic effect, in addition to moral beauty.

Things noble are tranquil by nature, and appear to slumber until contradiction and opposition rouses them into action. Such a contradictory mind is Kreon, whom the poet introduces into the piece, partly for the sake of Antigone, because he brings out her noble nature and the justice of her cause, and partly on his own account, in order that his miserable errors may appear hateful to us.

But as Sophocles intended to show us the

great mind of his heroine *before* the great deed of the drama, he wanted another contradictory element, and he finds it in Antigone's sister Irene. She, too, is a capital type of commonplace, and as such, a set-off against the greatness of Antigone's character.

Kreon acts, not from public virtue, but from hatred against the dead. Polineikes' attempt to reconquer his paternal inheritance, from which violence expelled him, was by no means so unheard-of a crime against the state. Whatever crime there was, his death was sufficient punishment; and there was no good reason for punishing his corpse.

It is wrong to excuse a violation of virtue in general by the plea of public duty. Kreon prohibits the burial of Polineikes: the corruption of the body is likely to poison the air; dogs and birds of prey will drag the members of the dead body about, and even defile the altars with them. Such a mode of action is an offence to the gods and to men; it is not a public virtue, but a public crime. Kreon is, moreover, opposed by all the persons in the piece. The elders of the state, who form the

chorus, are against him ; the people at large are against him ; Teiresias is against him, and his own family is against him. But he is obstinate ; he perseveres in his outrage until he has ruined his family, and until he himself is a mere shadow. But that we are still with him when we hear him speak, shows the mastership of Sophocles ; and this indeed is the essence of dramatic art. All his characters have the same gift of persuasion, and so eloquent are they on their motives that the audience will almost always take the part of the last speaker.

It is evident that Sophocles was trained a rhetor, and skilled in discovering all available reasons, good or bad, in a case. But his case, in this respect, leads him too far. There is, for instance, a passage in *Antigone* to which I object, and of which I would gladly hear that it is interpolated. For the heroine, after giving in the course of the piece the best reasons for her action, and displaying the generosity of the purest mind, proceeds at last, just before her death, to give utterance to a motive which is thoroughly bad, and almost comical.

She says she did for her brother what she would not have done for her children, if she had

been a mother, nor would she have done the same for her husband. For (these are her words) if my husband had died, I would have taken another; if my children were dead, another husband would have begot other children from me. But the case is different with my brother. I cannot have another, for my father and my mother are dead, and no one can beget me a brother.

Such, at least, is the meaning of her speech. Uttered by a heroine on the point of death, it jars, according to my opinion, with the tragic temper of the scene; it is far-fetched, and altogether a dialectic quibble.

Euripides wrote a few bad plays, such as *Electra*, and *Helena*. Aristophanes ridiculed him, and that is the reason why our philologists think less of him than of the other tragedians. We ought to judge a poet from his best productions, not from his worst. The philologists, although they have taste and solid massive knowledge, are nevertheless like the kings-of-arms and clerks of a herald's college. These gentlemen think nothing of a family which has not the

traditions of centuries. The philologists deal much in the same way with Euripides. They cavil at him because he has long been cavilled at. And yet what capital pieces are some of his works. The *Bacchæ* is his best. Is it possible to give a better and more spirited representation of the power of the Divinity, and the infatuation of mankind?

I am not of opinion that art can be brought to its decline by the agency of one man only. Many things, which are difficult to enumerate, must act together to produce that result. The tragic art of the Greeks did not decline through the agency of Euripides, just as little as the plastic art declined through the agency of some great sculptor who flourished with Phidias, though he did not equal him. A great age tends to improvement, and the lesser productions remain unproductive.

And the age of Euripides was a great age. It was an age not of retrogressive, but of progressive taste. Sculpture had not yet reached its culminating point, and the art of painting was in its first stages.

If the pieces of Euripides were open to strong

objections, in comparison to those of Sophocles, there is no reason to presume that later poets were compelled to imitate the faults of Euripides. Nor was there any necessity for their declining by means of those faults. But since the dramas of Euripides have great merits—so great, that some of them have even been preferred to the pieces of Sophocles, why, I should be glad to know, did not the later poets aim at those merits, and why did they not, in their turn, rise to the height of Euripides?

That not a fourth, fifth, and sixth tragic poet followed after the three great poets, is a fact, and the question why not would be difficult to answer. There is some room for surmise, and a few hypotheses may not, perhaps, be very far from the truth.

Man is a simple creature. However varied, and inscrutable he may be, the sphere of his condition is soon traversed.

If the Greeks had been in the same plight with us poor Germans, for whom Lessing wrote two or three tolerable dramas, I myself three or four, and Schiller five or six, then indeed they would have had space for a fifth and sixth tragic poet.

But the Greeks were very productive. Every

one of the three great poets wrote a hundred or nearly a hundred pieces. The tragic subjects contained in Homer, and in the traditions, had each of them been treated three or four times. So much had been done, and so little remained to be done, that the poets who came after the three great dramatists, found all the subjects exhausted.

The loss was not very great. Enough for the age were the tragedies thereof. For were not the productions of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides so grand and profound, that they might be heard again and again without palling upon the taste and deadening it! The colossal remains, few though they be, which have come down to us, are so grand and important, that we poor Europeans have been engaged on them these many years, and shall have our trouble with them for a few more centuries.

Lucretius is a great poet, and one whose fame will last, because he conceives acutely, and produces powerfully; his imagination too, is strong, and enables him to follow up his ideas into the depths of nature, and beyond the horizon of this visible world.

Conception may be either physiological or pathological ; the conception of the philosopher and the physician. There can be no doubt but that Lucretius was equally capable of either.

Next comes imagination, which imitative at first, merely repeats the objects. But its next action is productive, for it animates, developes, enlarges, and changes its original conception. We may also mention a circumspective imagination, one which looks around for things homogeneous or similar, to advance them in proof of its first proposition.

This shows the value of analogy, which reflects on many points at once, and combines all that is similar and harmonious. Parables come next, and their value is the greater according to the degree of their identity with the subject they are called in to illustrate. The best are those which appear actually identified with the subject.

Splendid examples of all these operations of the mind may be found in Lucretius.

At one time I thought of writing an essay on Lucretius and his time. I proposed to contrast him with the confusion and troubles of the age

(sixty years before Christ), and with his restless friend, Memmius; and I proposed also to show that the natural bias of his mind, and the circumstances of the time, compelled him to seek refuge in the Epicurean philosophy. But there was a scarcity of facts, which would have compelled me to pragmatise—to *invent* the bulk of the work. I dropped my plan, and have afterwards become convinced that Knebel took the right road.

The didactic value of the poem has been gloriously proved within these last years, since sentences of Epicurus's own writings were dug out of the tombs of Pompeii. They do not read well, and we want the work of Lucretius as a commentary. Even the ancients were not able to make much of Epicurus. It is therefore advisable to study Epicurus in Lucretius.

Lessing was the impersonation of sublime reason, and only his equals were really able to learn from him. To mediocrity he was dangerous.

The whole of Upper Germany owes its style to Wieland. He taught his countrymen many things, and the faculty of properly expressing their thoughts is by no means the least of the benefits he conferred upon them.

Equanimity and activity were beautifully balanced in Wieland. Hence he laboured calmly and dispassionately, but effectively, to cultivate the national mind.

Such a man as Voss is not likely to come again. Few have excited so powerful an influence on the higher cultivation of the Germans as he has done. He was altogether sound and substantial. Hence his relations to Hellenism were not artificial but very natural, and the result has been most beneficial to us.

Bürger was altogether a German talent, but he wanted basis and taste; he was as flat as his public.

Schiller, indeed, presented to him the ideal polished mirror with great abruptness, and hence Bürger is, perhaps, entitled to our sympathy; but Schiller could not be expected to suffer such vulgarities.

To acknowledge Bürger's talent cost me nothing. He had his importance for his time; his good and genuine poems still retain their value,* and will always preserve for him an honourable place in the history of German literature.

The legend of Faustus is not to be placed in the middle ages; its origin would appear to belong to the sixteenth, its perfection to the seventeenth century. At that time the Protestant conjurors were, to a certain extent, emancipated from ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and many impostors made the most of the follies, the helplessness, and the passions of mankind. To make money by means of magic circles and incantations appeared to them more easy than to eat their bread in the sweat of their brows.

The Roman-catholic church has always treated heretics and wizards in the same manner, and the most dreadful curses were hurled at all soothsayers, and interpreters of signs and omens. But the progress of knowledge, a closer insight

* These poems, with very few exceptions, are his unacknowledged translations of old English ballads.—ED.

into the workings of nature, made mankind the more eager for the possession of miraculous and mysterious powers. Protestantism did away with the fear of the church; the universities were more free, and this freedom tempted to impertinence and licentiousness. Thus, it appears that about the middle of the sixteenth century, this devilry and witchery became more methodically prominent, for up to that time it had been confined to the lowest dregs of the population. The story of Faustus was acted at Wittenberg, in the head-quarters of protestantism, and assuredly it was invented by protestants—for in all the writings on the subject, there is not a trace of clerical bigotry.

As for the title of my autobiography, *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, I was aware of the scepticism with which the public regard these biographical attempts. I met them on their own ground, by pleading guilty to some sort of poetic fiction; there was no necessity for doing so; it was mere spirit of contradiction, for I was seriously intent upon giving the real original truth, as far as I could see it, of my life. But

since this is scarcely possible, in later years, without drawing upon memory, and consequently upon imagination, and since one is, in a manner, compelled to make use of the poetic faculty, it is evident, that what we can give are the results and our present ideas of the past, rather than the details of the events, such as they really happened. Even the lowest book of Chronicles partakes of the spirit of the age in which it was written. The fourteenth century records a comet with greater parade and awe than the nineteenth; and an account of an important event changes its aspect within four-and-twenty hours.

All allowances for a difference of views and sentiments I have claimed and expressed by the word 'fiction,' in order to use the 'truth' of which I was conscious for my particular purpose. My readers must judge whether I attained that purpose, and here comes the question. Is there any congruity in the account? Does it convey the idea of a gradual development of an individuality which is already known by its productions?

In every history, even if it be told diplomatically, there are traces of the writer's nation

and party. A French writer of English history is vastly different from an English historian.

Consider, moreover, that an ætheric Lethe runs through us at every moment in the day; that we have but a moderate reminiscence of our joys, and scarcely any of our sufferings. I have always valued this gift of God; I have made use of it, and done my best to assist it.

Everything in Schiller was proud and grand; his eyes alone were soft; and as his body, so was his genius. He grasped boldly at great objects; he considered them, turned them about, and saw them in such and such a way, and handled them in such and such a manner. He considered his subject—so to say—from the outside; a tranquil development from the mind was by no means congenial to him. His genius was altogether desultory. Hence he was undecided, and never finished. He would frequently change a part just before the rehearsal.

Bold, from disposition and habit, as he was, he paid little attention to '*motivation.*' I remember what trouble he gave me with *William Tell*. He insisted on Gessler taking an apple from the tree, putting it on the boy's head, and ordering it to be shot at. I opposed this, and

persuaded him to give at least a motive for this cruel act, by making Tell's boy boast of his father's skill, saying he could hit an apple on the tree at a hundred yards' distance. At first Schiller would not consent, but at last he yielded to my arguments and entreaties, and followed my advice.

My habit of *motivating* too much made my pieces unpopular on the stage. My *Eugenia* is nothing but a concatenation of motives, and cannot, therefore, succeed on the stage.

Schiller's genius was altogether theatrical. He progressed with every new piece; every fresh attempt came nearer to perfection. But it is strange that from *The Robbers* there adhered to him a certain delight in cruelties, of which he could never divest himself, even in his brightest period. In *Egmont*, for instance, in the scene in the prison, when the sentence is read to Egmont, he wanted to have Alba, in a mask and cloak, in the background, observing and taking delight in the impression which the sentence would make on the prisoner—a sure type of insatiable revenge. However, I objected, and that odious figure was left out. He was a strange and great man.

Every week he was different and more perfect ; whenever I saw him he appeared to me to have advanced in reading, learning, and judgment.

Schiller, grand and generous as he was, disliked all shallow attempts to do him honour. When Kotzebue proposed a public demonstration to glorify him, he was so disgusted that his health became seriously affected. He was also averse to travelling, strangers, and visitors. If such were appointed to meet him, he was almost certain to be ill with vexation and anxiety. In such cases he was apt to be impatient, and even rude. I was present when a stranger, a surgeon, who wished to see him, entered his room without sending up his name. Schiller addressed and abused him with great violence, and the poor fellow was quite bewildered, and at a loss to find his way out of the room.

Schiller was as great at the tea-table as he might have been in a cabinet council. Nothing confused or embarrassed him ; nothing could impede the flight of his ideas ; his lofty views were always freely and unreservedly expressed. He was a man of the right sort, and we ought

to be as he was. We are always hampered and influenced by persons and circumstances. A teaspoon may put us out of countenance, if it is of gold instead of silver ; and thus paralyzed by a thousand considerations, we can never give a free vent to whatever greatness there may be in our nature. We are slaves to the objects ; they contract us into insignificance or swell us out into important proportions.

The idea of liberty pervades every one of Schiller's works. It changed its form in the progress of his cultivation. In his youthful days he yearned for physical liberty in life as well as in his poems ; at a later period, his aim was still liberty, but it was an ideal liberty.

Liberty is altogether a strange thing ; a contented mind wants not much of it. And what is the benefit of an excess of liberty, of which we cannot make use ? Contempt of authority is not freedom ; he who respects authority is really free. For respect elevates us, and our feeling shows that we have a sense of that which is above us, and are worthy of being raised to its level. On my journeys, I have frequently met with merchants from the north of Germany, who fancied they became my equals

when they rudely sat down at my table. Of course, sitting down with me in that manner did not make them my equals. The case would have been different if they had known how to estimate me, and treated me accordingly.

That physical liberty was the great aim of Schiller's youth, was partly caused by the peculiarity of his character, but chiefly by the oppression from which he suffered in the military school.

In his later years, when he had plenty of physical liberty, he craved for ideal liberty; and I am almost inclined to say that this idea killed him, for it induced him to overwork himself.

When Schiller came to Weimar, the grand-duke gave him a salary of one thousand dollars per annum, and he offered to pay him double that sum, in case bodily infirmities should prevent his continuing his labours. Schiller declined the offer, and could never be induced to avail himself of it. 'I have my natural talents,' said he, 'and I ought to do something for myself.' But in his later years, when his family increased, his necessities compelled him to write at least two pieces a year, and in order to do this, he continued his labours even at periods of bodily infirmity. His talents were to be made

obedient to his will, at any hour and at any time.

He never used to drink much ; he was a sober man ; but at such periods of bodily weakness he had recourse to wine and spirits. This ruined his health, and had an unfavourable influence on his productions.

For all that the critics object to in his pieces I trace to the above source. The passages of which they say that they are not as they ought to be, I call *pathological* passages ; he wrote them at times when he wanted the strength for true inspiration. I have great respect for the categorical imperative, and I know that it is productive of much good, but it ought not to be carried to an extreme, lest this idea of ideal liberty lead us to bad results.

The ancient poets dramatized well-known myths, and sometimes even parts of them. A modern poet, however, is compelled to give his hearers the whole length and breadth of the exposition of the dramatic story, in order to put their minds on a level with and prepare them for the dramatic fact. It was, therefore, a capital idea of Schiller to introduce his *Wallenstein* by means of a smaller piece. In

Wallenstein's Camp, he gives us the bulk, the weight, and power of the army, for the crisis at the end of the principal piece is the desertion of the army from Wallenstein, as soon as he changes the formula of the service.

My correspondence with Schiller terminated in 1805. The French invasion took place in 1806. It concluded an epoch, of which we scarcely retain the remembrance. That mode of mental progress which resulted, and which was fostered by a season of peace, was violently interrupted; a very different mode of cultivation was forced upon all, from childhood and youth upward.

There was also much false cultivation in that tumultuous time. Hence our correspondence alone remains as evidence of an epoch which is past, which can never return, but whose influence, extending to the present day, is not confined to the limits of Germany.

This work, by Johannes Müller, is a very valuable book.* It is indeed difficult for any

* Johannes Müller: *Four-and-twenty Chapters of General History*. 1810.

man to conceal his features behind the mask of his own production ; and an author reveals his character more distinctly in his book than in conversation, for, after all, every one fashions the world according to his own size. This is the case with this book, which I like, because it betrays the virtues as well as the faults of the author. The extensive course of reading on which it is founded is very respectable, and the parts in which the metal has been well purified, fused, and cast into an exquisite mould, may be called perfect. The book will also be beneficent to the majority of men. I, in my solitude, have again been struck with the fact that the history of the world cannot be written from an ethical point of view. The ethical standard is satisfactory, as far as it goes, but wherever it is too narrow, the work becomes unsatisfactory, and the reader is at a loss to understand what the author is aiming at.

The wonders of history are of good results to contemporaries and posterity only when you can show them that the most extraordinary and the greatest deeds have been achieved by great men amidst the strangest circumstances and accidents.

The Count Platen has all the qualities of a good poet. He is imaginative, inventive, witty, and productive. His technical cultivation is perfect, and his learning and perseverance are almost unequalled. His unfortunate polemical disposition is the only obstacle to his success.

That the grandeur of the environs of Naples and Rome cannot make him oblivious of the wretchedness of German literature, is quite unpardonable in a man of such eminent talents. The *Romantic Ædipus* shows that, especially with respect to technical skill, Platen, and he alone, is capable of writing the best German tragedy. But having, in that piece, parodied all tragic motives, how can he possibly think of writing a *bonâ fide* tragedy?

Besides, and this point is never sufficiently considered, these disputes pre-occupy the mind; the image of an enemy becomes a spectre, vitiating all free production, and creating great disorder in a sensitive mind. Lord Byron was ruined by his polemical disposition.

Platen's plays show the influence of Calderon. They are altogether spirited, and, in a certain respect, perfect, but they want specific weight and heavy solidity. They cannot produce a

profound and lasting impression on the reader's mind ; they move the chords of our heart with a slight and passing touch. They are like a piece of cork, which, floating on the water, makes no impression, but is lightly and rapidly borne onward on the surface.

The Germans look for a certain gravity—for a certain grandeur of sentiment—a fulness of the mind. Hence they all admire Schiller. I do not in the least doubt Platen's solidity of character, but owing to the different view he takes of art, that character is not shown in his productions. He abounds in ideas ; he is witty, sarcastic, and perfect as an artist, but all this cannot satisfy a German public.

The personal character of an author, and not his art or his genius, gives him his position in the public mind. Napoleon said of Corneille, *S'il vivait, je le ferais prince*. But he read Racine, and of Racine he said nothing of the kind. Hence, too, do the French respect La-fontaine, not on account of his poetical merits, but because of the greatness of his character, as shown in his writings.

It is with Shakspeare as with the mountains of Switzerland. Put the Mont Blanc on a

larger plain, and its height and grandeur will overawe you. But when you see it in its giant home, when you journey to it over its gigantic neighbours, the Jungfrau, the Finsteraarhorn, the Eiger, the Wetterhorn, the Gotthart, and Monte Rosa, the Mont Blanc will still appear a giant, but it will not astonish you to such an extent.

If any one denies that a good deal of Shakspeare's greatness belongs to his great and energetic time, I would ask such a man whether he believes that such an astounding phenomenon is possible in the England of our days,* in these wretched days of criticising and splitting journalism?

Our days have no room for that undisturbed, innocent, somnambulistic creation which alone can lead to great things. Our contemporary talents are all on the salver of publicity. The fifty critical papers which are daily published at fifty different places, and the gossip which they promulgate among the public, suppress all that is wholesome and sound. Whoever meddles with them is lost; all a man can do is to isolate himself with violence. This vicious, chiefly

* In the year 1824.

negative, æstheticising and criticising journalism, spreads indeed a sort of semi-cultivation among the mass, but on the productive genius it acts as a poisonous mist destroying the creative power of the tree, from the green foliage to the innermost core.

Milton's *Paradise Lost*, moved me to strange reflections. In this poem, as in all modern works of art, it is chiefly the individual which manifests itself in creating and awakens our interest. At the side of a few natural and energetic motives, there are a great many lame and false motives, which cause a sickening sensation. But then the poet is an interesting person; he is a man of character, feeling, understanding, learning; he has poetical and oratorical talents, and various other good qualities. And the strange and singular accident by which he, in his quality as a conquered revolutionist, feels more at home in the part of the devil than in the part of the angel, has a great influence on the outline and the composition of the poem, while the author's blindness, influences its temper and colouring. Hence the work will always be the only one of its kind, and as I said before, it

makes up in triumphant nature for whatever it may want in art.

Among other reflections, I could not help thinking about the 'liberum arbitrium,' about which I do not generally puzzle my head. It acts a wretched part in the poem, and in the Christian religion generally. For when we assumed that man is originally good, his liberum arbitrium is nothing but the absurd faculty of choosing the evil instead of the good, and of becoming guilty by so doing. But if we assume men to be naturally bad, or, more properly speaking, if we assume that his case is that of the animal, and that he is under the immediate power of his inclinations, then, indeed, does the liberum arbitrium become a consequential person, presuming, as it does, to act from nature against nature. This shows how Kant could not help admitting a radical evil, and why the philosophers, who delight in natural man, are so sadly puzzled with respect to his freedom, and why they become so outrageous whenever you fail setting great store by good inclinations.

The chief fault which Milton made, after once choosing his subject, is in the manner in which he introduces his persons, Gods, angels, devils, and men, in a way, unconditionally. Afterwards,

when he would make them act, he is compelled, from time to time, and in several instances, to motivate them, and this he attempts to excuse in a clever, and in most cases, in a witty manner. The poet is certainly an excellent and interesting person, with a strong sense for the sublime ; and in this he is rather benefited than otherwise, by the absurdity of his subject.

I know of no work which, like Milton's *Samson*, gives so approximative an expression to the spirit and the manner of the old Greek tragedy, and which is equally praiseworthy for its plan and execution.

There is no saying how powerfully I was influenced by Goldsmith and Sterne at the most important period of my mental development. This sublime and benevolent irony, this equitable candour with so much sagacity, this mildness in misfortune, this equality of temper, in spite of all changes and all the other kindred virtues, educated me most praiseworthily ; and after all, these are the sentiments and habits of thought, which cause us to retrace our steps from all the errors of life.

It is, moreover, remarkable, that Yorick leans

to a forgetfulness of form, while Goldsmith is altogether form. I followed his example; but our worthy Germans are convinced that want of form is the true essence of humour.

Lord Byron was altogether in the dark about himself. He lived most passionately from day to day, and he never knew and cared what he was about. Indulging himself with every licence, and approving of nothing in others, it was but natural that he should be at war with himself, and the world with him. From the very beginning, he offended the most eminent writers with his 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.'

At a later period, he could not live with them without taking a step backwards, and revoking some of the better things he had said. In his works he continued his opposition and censure; he attacked the State and the Church. This inconsiderate opposition compelled him, at length, to leave England, and in the course of time, it would have driven him out of Europe. Everything was too narrow for him. Enjoying, as he did, the most unlimited personal liberty, he felt himself oppressed; to him the world was a prison. He went to Greece, not from his own free will, but because his false

position to the world compelled him to take that step.

His renouncing all tradition, and all patriotism was his ruin, and his revolutionary tendencies and his agitation of mind prevented a proper development of his talents. This eternal opposition and censure, is, moreover, highly derogatory to his excellent works, such as they are. For not only does the reader share the poet's discomfort, but all this opposition tends to negation, and negation is nothing. What can be the advantage of saying that bad things are bad? And when I say that good things are bad, I do a great deal of harm. Whoever would do good in the world, ought not to deal in censure, he ought not to pay any attention to what is wrong, and he ought always to do that which is good. We ought not to destroy, but we ought to construct what may be pleasing to humanity.

Lord Byron is to be considered as a man, as an Englishman, and as a great genius. He derives his good qualities from his quality as a man; his bad qualities are owing to his being an Englishman and a peer of the realm. His genius is incommensurable.

All Englishmen as such are without reflection. Dissipation and party spirit prevent all quiet development. But they are great as practical men.

Lord Byron, for instance, was never able to reflect on himself, and reflections generally were by no means his forte, as is proved by his motto: 'Plenty of money and no government,' for plenty of money makes in fact no government.

But he succeeds in all he produces, and of him it may be said that inspiration supplies the want of reflection. He was always a poet, and hence what came from the man, and chiefly what came from his heart, was excellent. He came by his pieces as women come by pretty children; they do not think of them, and do not know how or in what way.

His is a great and innate genius, and I have never known of any one who possessed true poetic power to such an extent as he. In his conceptions of the world and his clear view of the past, he is as great as Shakspeare. But Shakspeare's pure individuality is more powerful. Byron knew this, and that is the reason why he does not say much about Shakspeare, though he had whole scenes from his plays in his memory. He would gladly have ignored him, for Shakspeare's humour is a stumbling-stone in his path; he feels that he cannot com-

pete with it. He did not ignore Pope, because he had no reason to fear him. He respects him, and quotes him on all occasions, for he is well aware that Pope is a mere wall compared to him.

His high rank, as an English peer, was very obnoxious to Byron. Every genius is hampered by the outer world, and much more so a genius whose lot is cast in a high position, and who is encumbered with wealth. A certain middle state is most congenial to genius; hence all great artists and poets spring from the middle classes. Byron's passion for the unlimited would not have been so dangerous to him, if his birth had been lower, and his means smaller. But as it was, he had it in his power to do all he wished to do, to follow the impulse of the moment, and this entangled him in numberless quarrels. Besides, how could a man of high rank have respect and consideration for any other class? He gave utterance to every movement of his soul, and he was consequently always engaged in a conflict with the world.

It is a curious fact, that a great portion of the life of a high-born and wealthy Englishman is spent in elopements and duels. Lord Byron

himself tells us that his father ran away with three women. Under such circumstances, how can a man be expected to be a steady son?

He lived always in a state of nature, and he must always have been sensible of the necessity of self-defence. Hence his practice of pistol shooting. He might expect a challenge at every hour in the day.

He could not live a solitary life; hence, in spite of all his whimsicalities, he was very indulgent to his companions. One evening he read that splendid poem on the death of General Moore. His friends did not exactly know what to say to it. Their indifference made no impression upon him, and he pocketed the poem as quietly as possible. For a poet, he was really as quiet as a lamb. Another man in his place would have wished them to the devil.*

* Goethe was evidently misled by an anecdote which some inventive or inaccurate traveller palmed off upon him. The poem alluded to, "*Not a drum was heard, not a funeral sound,*" is not by Byron, as every one knows, though, in common with many other poetical productions of the day, it was ascribed to him. Of course Byron did not read this poem to his friends, at least not as his own production. The Germans generally have an inexhaustible store of vulgar errors and spurious anecdotes concerning Lord Byron's life and character. — ED.

Byron would be much greater as a poet if all his opposition had vented itself in parliament. But as he scarcely came to make a speech, he kept all his invectives against his nation in his own heart, and nothing was left to him but to work them up into poetry. A great many instances of Byron's negative spirit may be designed as *Speeches out of Doors*.

Byron's *Cain* shows how unsatisfactory the Church doctrine was to a fine mind like his, and how he struggled by means of that piece to emancipate himself from a doctrine which had been forced upon him. The English clergy have no reason to be grateful to him.

Byron's women are capital. Woman, indeed, is the only vessel into which we moderns may pour our ideality. Homer has anticipated everything else in his Achilles and Odysseus; the bravest man and the wisest.

Although Byron died at an early age, it cannot be said that literature lost much. Byron could not go farther. He had reached the summit of his creative power, and however much he might have written, he could not have en-

larged the limits which were fixed for his genius. In that incomprehensible poem of the *Last Judgment*, he went to the extremes of his capabilities.

How great and pure a man is Molière ! Yes; *pure* :—that is the word. There is in him nothing twisted and unnatural. And then his greatness ! He reigned over his time ; while, on the contrary, Iffland and Kotzebue were subject to theirs, which hemmed them in on all sides, and hampered them. Molière chastised his contemporaries by representing their characters such as they were.

The haughty style and the delightful humour of Voltaire's *Memoirs* are worthy of his best works. He writes of the King of Prussia in the manner of Suetonius, who recorded the scandal of the masters of the world ; and if it were possible or useful to open the eyes of the world to the failings of kings and princes, I am sure that this volume might effect the object. However, it will be read as satires on women are read ; we laugh, sneer, and, the next moment, we kneel to our idols, just as we knelt before.

It is as if a god (Momus, for instance,) but

a rake of a god, were to write of a king, and the great ones of this world. This is generally the character of all the witty productions of Voltaire, but in this book that character is most prominent. There is not a drop of human blood in it—not a trace of sympathy and honest kindness. But in their stead we are delighted with the ease, *height* of genius, and cool composure of the work. I say a *height* of genius, not loftiness. We may compare him to a balloon carried to a giddy height by the lightness of the gas with which it is filled, and showing to the aeronaut plains where we see mountains.

We, whom the accident of birth deprived of political power, and whose tempers are unsuited to the pursuit of wealth, we have a vested interest in the powers of genius. We delight in their increase and extension.

Beranger's is a happy nature—firm, pure, and harmonious. He never asked, what does the age require? what is likely to make an impression? what will please the public? or what are others doing? with a view of imitating them. He always produced himself, without caring for the demands of the public, or of a party. At

certain important periods, he did, indeed, pay some attention to the temper, the wishes, and the wants of the people, but by so doing he was only confirmed within himself, because he understood that his own mind harmonised with that of the people. He was never induced to give utterance to any other thought but such as lived already in his own heart.

I am not generally fond of so-called political poetry, but I like Beranger's poems. There is in them nothing invented, no trace of imagined or imaginary interest. He never hits at random, but he aims at definite, and always at important, objects. His loving admiration of Napoleon, and the reminiscence of his glorious wars, and at a time, too, when such reminiscences were a comfort to the French, who were in a manner, oppressed; his hatred of parsondom, and jesuitical obscurantism—those are features to which I cannot help subscribing. And how masterly does he treat his subjects? How he turns and fashions them in his own mind, before uttering them. And when all is mature, what wit, irony, spirit, and ridicule—what heartiness, naïvety, and grace, sparkle in every line! His songs have shed joy into millions of hearts; they

are familiar even to the working classes, and, at the same time, they are so high above the level of commonplace, that the intercourse with these graceful spirits accustoms and compels the people to have better and more generous thoughts. What greater praise can there be given to a poet?

A political poem is, at the best, only the organ of a single nation, and, generally speaking, merely the organ of a party. Its reward, if it be a good poem, is the enthusiasm of that nation or party. A political poem is, moreover, the result of certain circumstances, which pass away, and the poem with them. Beranger, however, was much favoured. Paris is France. All the great interests of his great country were concentrated in the capital; there they lived, and found their echo. And in the majority of his political songs he is by no means the mere organ of a party; his subjects have that general, national interest, that the poet's voice is really and truly the voice of the people.

Extremes are unavoidable in a revolution. Political revolutions aim at the redress of grievances; but they rush almost imperceptibly into murder and other outrages. In their modern

literary revolution, the French aimed at first merely at a greater freedom of form ; but they do not stop there, and with the old form they condemn the subject-matter. Generous sentiments and deeds are voted dull, and attempts are making to work up all sorts of atrocities. Instead of the beauties of Greek mythology, we have now devils, witches, and vampires, and the great heroes of the past are shelved, for the sake of swindlers and convicts. This sort of thing is striking ! It makes an impression ! But the public gets accustomed to this strong meat, and cries out for more seasoning and greater pungency. A young and ambitious writer, who wants the strength of character to go his own way, must needs submit to the fashion of the day, and, if possible, he must be more terrible and lugubrious than his predecessors. This hunting after outward means of effect prevents all gradual, serious development of genius, and that is the greatest misfortune which can befall genius, although literature in general is likely to profit from this altered tendency. The extremes and excrescences which I mentioned will by degrees pass away, and there will be this one advantage, that the freedom of form has extended and diversified the subject-matter ; and that no subject in

the world and in life is to be excluded as un-poetical. Literature just now is in a violent fever—its condition is neither good nor desirable, but it is likely to be productive of an improved state of health. The atrocities which pervade a poetical work will in future times become useful ingredients, and truth and purity, though exiled in our own days, will soon be properly appreciated and eagerly sought for.

Of the last French novels I will only say that they constitute a literature of despair, one which excludes all that is true and æsthetic. *Notre Dame de Paris*, by Victor Hugo, has the merit of a profound knowledge of ancient places, customs, and events; but the persons are without a trace of natural life. They are mere lay-figures of men and women; they are all well made, and in due proportion, but still mere stuffed dolls, which the author treats most unmercifully, twisting and straining them into the strangest positions, torturing and mangling them, body and soul, and finally tearing them into rags and shreds. All this is done with that great historical-rhetorical talent, and with a lively and powerful imagination, without which,

indeed, no talent on earth could produce such abominations.

Victor Hugo's is a beautiful talent, but he is a slave to the unfortunate romantic tendency of his time, which induces him to produce by the side of beautiful forms, the ugliest and most unsufferable shapes. His *Notre Dame de Paris*, was a great tax upon my patience. It is the most abominable book that ever was written. There is no compensation for its torments in the joy one might feel at the true representation of human nature and human character. On the contrary, his book is utterly devoid of nature and truth. The so-called acting personages he introduces are not human; they are miserable wooden dolls, which he buffets about just as he pleases, and twists into sundry contortions and grimaces, until they serve the hits he intends to make. What an age it must be which not only makes such a book possible and produces it, but goes to the length of considering it tolerable and pleasant reading.

How can a man help getting worse and ruining his talent, when he has the audacity to write two tragedies and a novel in one single

year, and besides, when it appears that he works only to make enormous sums of money? I do not quarrel with Victor Hugo for his desire to be rich, or to gather the glory of the day. But if he would wish to live for posterity, he ought to write less and work more.

Acknowledging, as we do, the great qualities of Dante's genius and mind, we are much assisted in the estimation of his works if we consider that in his age—the age of Giotto—the plastic art regained its natural vigour. This plastic genius inspired him likewise. He saw the objects so distinctly with the eye of his imagination, that he was able to reproduce them with distinct outlines. Hence his most abstruse and extraordinary conceptions appear to be sketched from nature. The third rhyme too, is scarcely ever an obstacle to him; in one way or another it assists him in realizing his idea and sketching his figures.

The plan of Dante's *Inferno* is, in a manner, micromegic, and hence it confuses the senses. From above, down to the lowest abyss, we are to fancy circles within circles; this, however, gives us the idea of an amphitheatre, which,

though large, strikes the imagination as limited and confined by art, since from the top we survey all, even the arena. Look at the picture by Orgagna, and it will strike you as an inverted tabula of Cebes. It is rather a rhetoric than a poetic fiction ; it excites, but it does not satisfy the imagination.

But though we may not praise the conception as a whole, we are certainly astonished by the extraordinary profusion of the various localities ; it astounds, confuses, and awes us. This applies to that most severe and distinct execution of the scenery, which from step to step excludes all further view ; to all the conditions and relations of the scenes represented and to the persons, their punishments and torments. Take for instance, the verses from the twelfth Canto :

The place where to descend the precipice
 We came, was rough as Alp ; and on its verge
 Such object lay as every eye would shun.
 As is that ruin which Adice's stream
 On this side Trento struck, shouldering the wave,
 Or loosed by earthquake or for lack of prop ;
 Far from the mountain's summit whence it moved
 To the low level, so the headlong rock
 Is shivered, that some passage it might give
 To him who from above would pass ; e'en such
 Into the chasm was that descent.

* * * * *

Thus down our road we took,
 Through those dilapidated crags, that oft
 Moved underneath my feet, to weight like theirs
 Unused. I pondering went, and thus he spake :
 Perhaps thy thoughts are of this ruin'd steep,
 Guarded by the brute Violence, which I
 Have vanquished now. Know, then, that when I erst
 Hither descended to the nether hell,
 This rock was not yet fallen. But past doubt
 (If well I mark) not long ere He arrived,
 Who carried off from Dis the mighty spoil
 Of the highest circle, then through all its bounds
 Such trembling seized the deep concave and foul,
 I thought the universe was thrilled with love,
 Whereby there are who deem the world hath oft
 Been into chaos turned; and in that point
 Here and elsewhere, that old rock toppled down.

CARY'S *Translation.*

Here I add the following explanation. Although in my original edition of Dante (Venice, 1739) the lines from *e quel* to *schiro* are applied to the Minotaurus, I consider, nevertheless, that it applies to the locality; the place was mountainous, rocky (*alpestro*), but that is not enough for the poet; its speciality (*perquel ch' io er' anco*) was so terrible that it confused vision and thought. Hence, in order to satisfy himself and others, at least to some extent, he mentions, not as a parable but in the way of an ocular demonstration, the fall of a mountain, which, probably in his time, blocked up the road from Trento to Verona. On that spot, perhaps,

there were large layers of rocks and granite blocks heaped upon one another, not crumbling away or connected and covered over with vegetation, but in such a manner that the large pieces of rock, lever-like resting, might easily have been displaced by the foot of an adventurous explorer. This indeed is the case as Dante descends.

But the poet desires to outdo by far this phenomenon of nature ; he quotes Christ's descent into hell as the cause not only of this fall, but also of many other devastations in the infernal regions.

The journeyers approach now the dyke which is confined by the river of blood, an ample foss that in a bow was bent, as circling all the plain,

Between it and the rampart's base,
On trail ran Centaurs, with keen arrows armed,
As to the chase they on the earth were wont.

On this plain Virgil advances near to the Chiron ; Dante, however, moves with unsteady steps amidst the rocks. We must again look for him, for the Centaur says to his companions,

Are ye aware that he who comes behind
Moves what he touches? The feet of the dead
Are not so wont.*

* Cary's *Dante*, pp. 34, 35.

Now I appeal to your imagination whether or not this enormous fall of mountains and rocks is not altogether present to the mind?

The same may be demonstrated in almost every scene of the other cantos, and such parallels make us more familiar with the most essential peculiarities of Dante's poetic genius.

The distinction between Dante the living man and the departed dead, is pointed out in some other places; for instance, in the verses in which the spiritual denizens of the Purgatorio are afraid of Dante, because his form casts a shadow, which shows them that he is still 'in the flesh.'

Alfieri is remarkable rather than pleasing. His life explains his works. He torments his readers and hearers in the same way that he tormented himself as an author. He was a thorough aristocrat. He hated the tyrants, because he was a bit of a tyrant himself; and fate served him according to his merits, when it awarded him due, but still a very lenient punishment through the hands of the Sansculottes. This aristocratic and courtly character betrays itself at last in a very ridiculous manner, when he acknowledges and rewards his own high

merits, by conferring upon himself an order of knighthood. He showed, in the most unmistakable way, that those forms and vanities had become flesh of his flesh, and blood of his blood.

It is a remarkable fact, that music, the moment it steps forth from its original simple depth, becomes the property of the passing time, and is compelled to flatter the ears of the frivolous. No wonder, then, that, after so many years, it should strike into the path on which we now see it.

The moment that music takes the first energetic step to act upon the outer world, it excites, most powerfully, the rhythm which is innate in us, compelling it to manifest itself in quick steps and dance, in singing and shouting. By degrees it runs wild into the *transonic* (vulgo Turkish) music, or into 'Iodeln,'* or the love songs of birds.

Next comes a higher cultivation—the pure Cantilenic flatters and delights; but in its gradual progress, it develops the harmonic chorus.

* The peculiar, inarticulate songs of the Swiss and Tyrolese mountaineers.

Thus does the perfect reality tend backward again to its divine origin.

Of all the arts, music is most absorbing to the mind, whether it wake the tranquil spirit to awe and adoration, or excite the livelier senses to dancing joy.

On several occasions, I have remarked that the necessity of technical and artistic training is felt in music by far more than in the plastic arts. The reason may be, that the musician is more critically situated than the painter; for he comes personally forward and exercises his art in the very presence of the public. He must be perfectly sure of himself and of his instrument. A painter, even a portrait painter, is merely grumbled at; but the musician who displeases the public, is likely to be hissed and otherwise insulted, very much like an actor.

A dramatic poem which reads well is generally thought fit for the stage. This, however, is a mistake. A piece which was not written, intended, and fashioned for the stage, cannot bear acting, and however you may turn it and twist

it about, it will be awkward and incongruous. I took a deal of trouble with *Götz von Berlichingen*, but yet it will not do for the theatre. It is too long ; I was obliged to cut it in two. Of these the last has theatrical effect, but the first part is a mere exposition of the story. Perhaps it might succeed, if the first part had one representation merely to show the facts of the case, and if the second part were afterwards repeatedly acted. It is the same with Schiller's *Wallenstein* ; the *Piccolominis* are never acted, but *Wallenstein's Tod* draws full houses.

To be theatrical, a piece must be symbolical. That is to say, every action must have an importance of its own, and it must tend towards one more important still. Molière's *Tartuffe* is a model piece in this respect. Think of the exposition contained in the first scene ! All is, from the very beginning, most important, and indicative of more important things to come. The exposition of Lessing's *Minna von Barnhelm* is likewise capital ; but the exposition of *Tartuffe* is without its equal ; it is the grandest and best of its kind.

In Calderon we find the same theatrical perfection. His plays are altogether fit for the stage, no trait is in them but what is calculated

for an intended effect. Calderon is a genius who at the same time had the most powerful understanding.

Shakspeare wrote his dramas from the depths of his own nature. But his age, and the arrangements of the stage at the time, were not exacting, and his things were taken as he gave them. But if Shakspeare's plays had been written for the court of Madrid, or the theatre of Louis XIV., he would probably have been compelled to submit to a greater severity of theatrical form. There is, however, no reason to lament that things were as they were, for Shakspeare gains as a poet what he loses as a dramatist. Shakspeare is a great psychologist, and his dramas show us the true feelings of human nature.

The actor's art is in the same case with all other arts. What the artist does or did, gives us the sensation in which he was at the moment of producing his work. Our temper follows his; we are free with him, and his anxiety awakens our own. The artist is generally free when he is altogether at home in his subject, as, for instance, in the Dutch pictures, in which those artists represented the kind of life whose every feature they had perfectly mastered.

If we are to find the same freedom of the mind in the actor, it is requisite that, by means of study, fancy, and temper, he should have mastered his part; he must be able to draw upon his constitution, and he ought to be supported by a certain youthful energy. Study is not sufficient without fancy; and study and fancy will not avail him without temper. Actresses succeed generally by means of imagination and temper.

Music rules with a high hand over its votaries; it compels them to adhere to tune and time. The reciting actor, however, requires long practice to attain a certain harmony with himself, and to improve almost instinctively, as much as his nature will permit. A German actress, for instance, must play the most incongruous parts; she would certainly run into mad eccentricities, if her own mind did not keep her within the limits of tact and good sense. Actresses, in fact, thanks to their innate obstinacy, are better in their art than actors, who are too prone to become either pedants or eccentrics.

An actor ought to take his lessons from a sculptor and a painter. If he would represent a Grecian hero, he ought to have studied the

antique statues, and their graceful attitudes in sitting, standing, or walking. But the cultivation of the body alone is not enough ; he should read the authors of ancient and modern times, not only because such study teaches him to understand his part, but also because it will throw an air of higher grace on his appearance and his attitudes.

The relative positions of the poet and the actor are exactly like those of the poetic lover and the woman to whom he addresses his verses. The woman fancies that *she* is meant. It is the same with the actor. The poet's idea suffers always from the representation ; for the crowd applaud the actor, without bestowing one thought on the poet.

The French theatre has its century of art and technical perfection ; the actor's art has its precedents. In Germany all is new and unsatisfactory. Our actors know nothing of art ; they have no idea of the mysteries of their craft ; they pretend to do all by such and such an individuality.

Iffland is the re-inventor of our lost dramatic

art. He is a true artist, for he separates his parts so completely that not any two of them have a single trait in common. This separation is the basis of all the rest; this distinct outline gives its character to each figure; the actor obliterates the part of yesterday by the part of to-day, and separates himself at his liking from his own individuality.

THE END.

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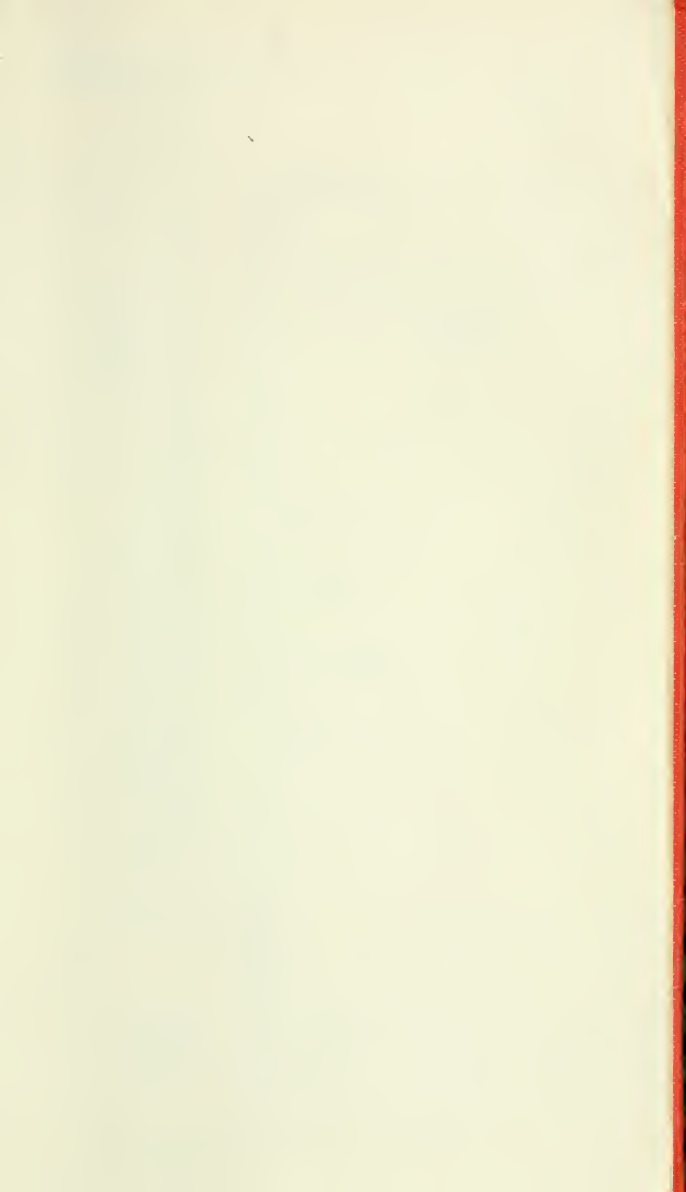
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